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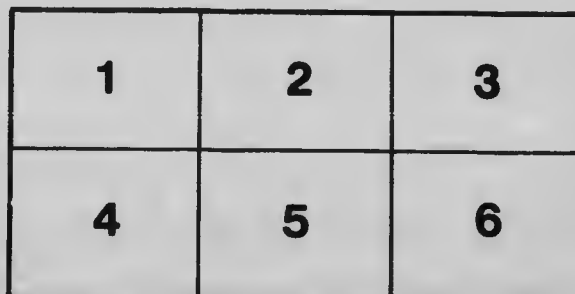
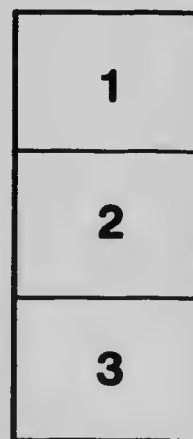
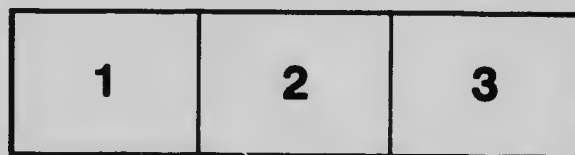
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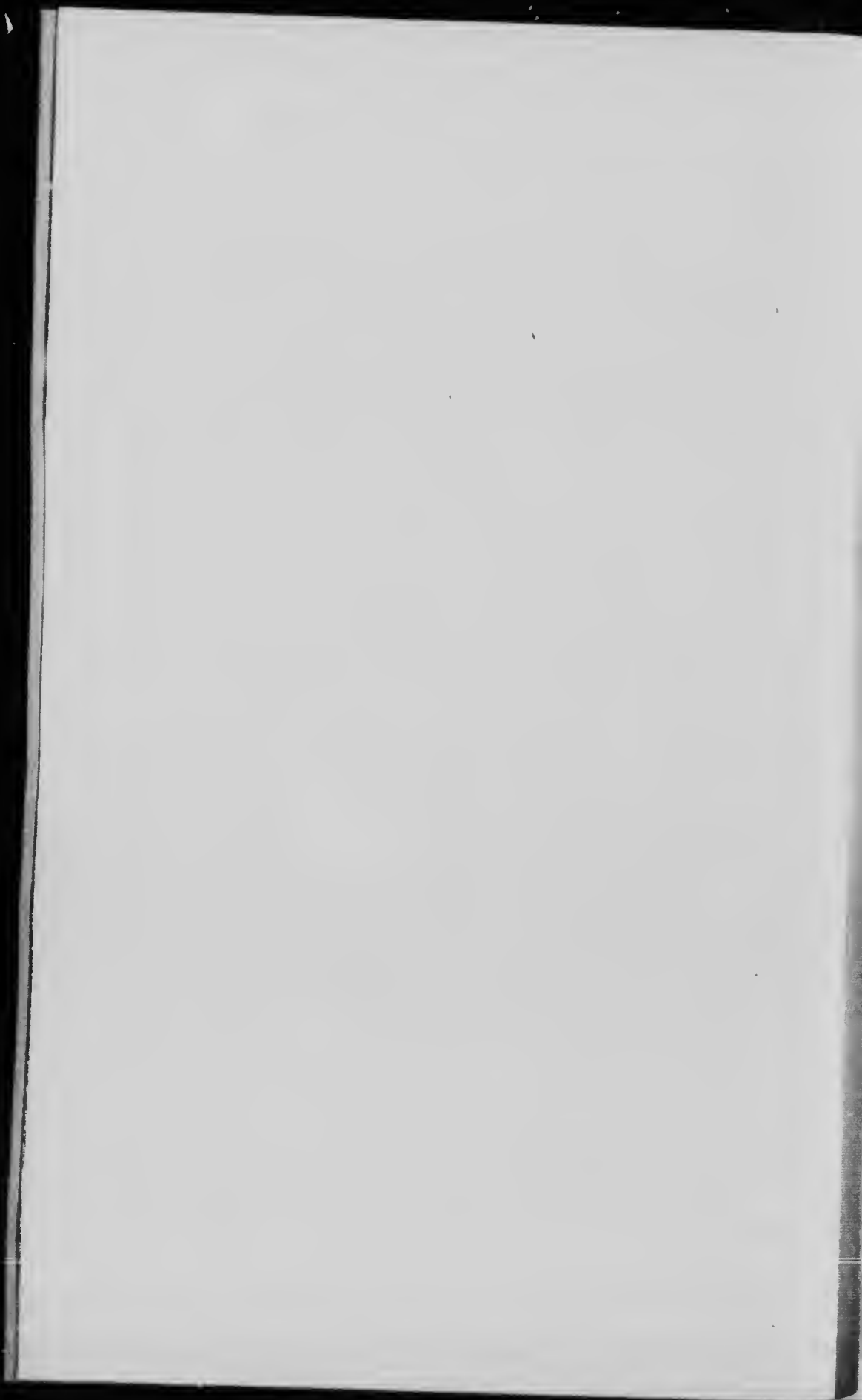
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Poetry

HOMESTEAD RHYMES

By E. L. CHICANOT

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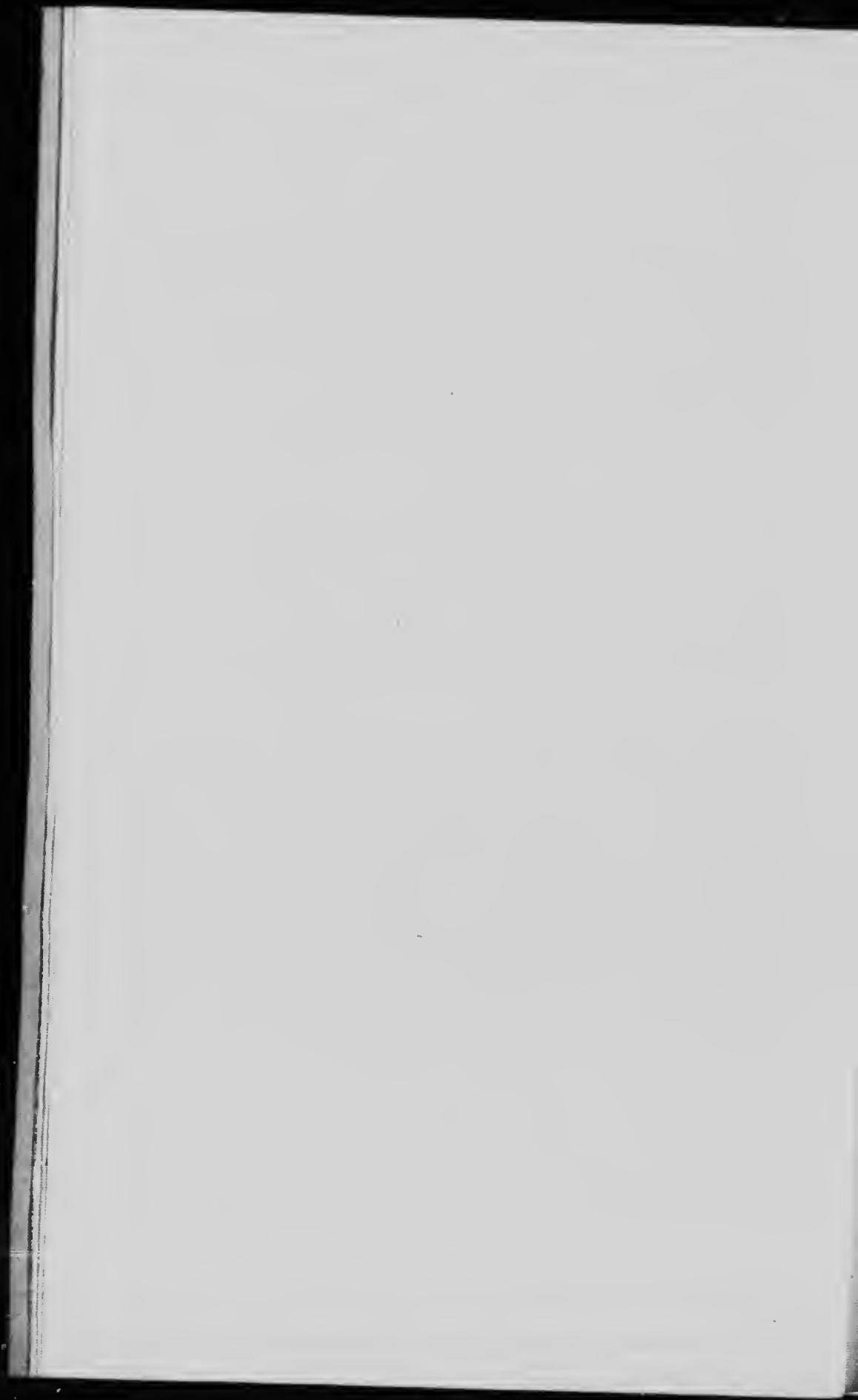
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PRELUDE

My rhymes are rough, as of the land they're telling;
My pen is weak, unworthy of that land;
The atmosphere is pregnant, soul-compelling,
But the Things beyond vague gropings of this hand.

Begotten of the wilds of stern Alberta,
Upon the golden plains at sunset flush,
Beneath the shade of tamarac and poplar,
'Pon creek and mighty lake at twilight hush,

Amid prolific western cities' torrent,
In lonely shack remote of humankind,
On trail that bears along an endless current
To Homestead Land, a phantom fancy shrined.

Of that land yet mystic, real, would I be singing,
Of the pioneers who toil to break the spell,
Strong men and women to past eras clinging,
Who hew a home in th' echo of a knell;

The magic of the trail, the lure of ploughland,
The cruel, the soothing breast of western strife,
The Wanderers, life-woosers of the Now-land,
The vagaries that crowd the homestead life.

And you of whom they're written, manhood proven,
You whom I know, big-souled, and hewn in flint,
Look kindly on these verses pygmy-woven,
One sought to put your heart-throbs into print.

THE VOICE OF THE WESTLAND

I am the voice of the Westland, and I call from the
ends of the earth,
Call from my snow-diamond Rockies, call to the land
of new birth,
Call o'er the pale blue Pacific, call from Atlanta's cold
shores,
Call to my prairies and forests, call to my long cached
stores;
Come all ye tired and weary, come ye who sink
'neath the yoke,
Come from the lands over-peopled, come from the
fettors that choke,
Come from the grime of the workshop, come from a
room-stilted air,
Come, all ye workers with dreamings, come to a
service that's fair;
Come from the soul-blasting cities, you by your
masters oppressed,
Come, all ye downtrod and weary, you will I give
wealth and rest;
Come to me, servers of mortals, under my banner
enlist,
You will I shape for my serving, moulding you as
you resist.
You will I roast in my summers, you will I freeze in
my fall,
You will I temper with blizzard, torture you under my
thrall,
Shaping your minds and your bodies, forming with
stern-gentle hand
Creatures that be not unworthy, elect of my long-
promised land.

THE VOICE OF THE WESTLAND

Toil will be yours and labor—pain, as you hew you
a home,
Anguish, to bring 'neath your thralldom my virginal
gumbo and loam.
Your seed shall you sow in dire labor, pack it and
float it amain,
Visioning pioneer fancies, watching in hope and with
pain.
Blight will I send out upon it, freezing the green
entombed shoots,
Icy bombardments to bury green straw with the deep
hidden roots;
Drought when the parched fields are steaming, flood
o'er the water-logged land;
Fields that are golden and heavy my frost blight will
kill as they stand;
Stacks that in thanks you have garnered, rotted and
smoking I bring;
In dread you will gaze at my winter, feeling already its
sting.
Oh, you will curse and revile me—curse the forlorn
prairie sod,
Curse the dire land and its people—almost will you
curse your God,
Swear in my torturing blizzard, return to a gentler
clime,
Back to the land that nurtured you, that you left for
the glittering grime.
The snows and the toil of hard winter keep lurid the
flames of your wrath,
Body and spirit I harass as you sit by your desolate
hearth.

THE VOICE OF THE WESTLAND

Then as you see the snows shrunken you gather your
household about,
Then will my spring burst upon you, then will the
swallow sing out,
Then will you gaze at its beauties, helpless, affrighted,
amazed,
'Mid glittering waters, snow-gathered, your resolve
will be gone as you gazed.
Back to the plough and the seed-drill, new faith and
ambition begot,
The desolate winter behind you, the frost-ruined
harvest forgot.
Oh, the glories of unfolding springtide, a book with a
page for each day,
The changing of garments from snow-white, to the
glistening emerald and bay;
The redolent scent of the poplars, the glowing new
shoots of the pine,
The meadow-lark's song, and the robin, an atmosphere
hallowed, divine.
You swear that the new year has promise to pay for
an old season's debts,
You dream once again 'neath your cabin, as the
luminous southern sun sets.
But full many a year on shall follow, and you bear but
the same bitter yoke,
For I may not be won in a season, and ME you but
glimpse through my cloak.
I will flaunt you at every turning, and harass each
move that you make,
"Never surprised" be your slogan—the dreams of a
future your stake.

THE VOICE OF THE WESTLAND

But I hold tight my grip on your heart-strings, for my
love is the love of a life,
And beneath all your cursings there's something that
holds you to pioneer strife.
Fires o'er the prairies and forests shall ravish o'er
limitless vasts,
Red legions marshalled against you, belching out
withering blasts;
Flames ruddy, lurid, and grass-fed, baring the clay
and the loam,
Greedy gorging on pastures, gluttoning what you
called home.
Your births you shall have in strange places, with
pain and with greater travail,
Strange deaths shall encompass you striving with
man-weapons, pygmy-like, frail.
At the fords you will drown in spring torrents, or see
your prized teams borne away,
Some frail in my blizzards shall perish, and some 'neath
the ice-breaks shall stay;
My forests and mines shall make harvest, my moun-
tains and valleys take toll,
All that you take shall be paid for, and the price must
be paid e'er the goal.
The price that you pay is a big one, but jewels are not
purchased with filth,
And the bodies and souls that can purchase, them will
I sate with my wealth.
For as sure as you fought the fight fairly, as sure as
the game has been hard,
As sure as you strive to the finish, so sure shall you
have your reward.

THE VOICE OF THE WESTLAND

The stores of my plains shall be yours, the fruits of
my gumbo and loam;
I will sate you beyond your old dreamings, and
then you will love it—your home.
The land that you cursed once you swear by, you love
with a terrible love,
The land that you earned with your manhood, that
you gave up your best years to prove.
Then come, all you stalwart and weary (my sons be
no enervate scum),
Come, all ye toilers with dreamings, well reckon the
paying, but come.
Come to my forests' green bosom, come to my prairies
bare space,
Come to me, hale wives and maidens, the mothers of
my future race,
Come, civilization's failures, placeless in life's dizzy
plan,
Come to my lists, waking youthhood—you will I
turn into man.
You who are nought to your masters but the slaves of
an hour soon past,
Thinkers who see but life thralldom, be freemen upon
my lone vast.
Vendors of youth and of manhood, think of the
long years to be,
Look out before you, time-servers, come and be servers
of me.
I want no enervate weaklings, I ask not a lusted
world's scum;
Well reckon the payment I ask you, look out before
you, but—Come.

THE HOMESTEADER

I that was once pride of Mayfair,
I that have rode in the Row,
Basked for a while in gay Monte's glare,
Lost out my all on a throw.
Washing out dishes and stewpans,
Standing in inches of dirt,
Working meanwhile over new plans,
Patching my other shirt—
Me that 'ave bin what I've bin.

Me that was nowt but a navy,
Bustin' up gravel an' stone,
Livin' like hell—do you savvy?
Scrapin' the meat off the bone.
Lord of a quarter-section,
Six cows, pigs, a hundred broke,
Buggy an' all ter perfection,
Ekal of t'other bloke—
Me that 'ave bin what I've bin.

Me that come over from G'licia,
Not no vork there for de mans,
Fat man got all de money, shir,
Foor feller don' got no chans.
Railroad I vork for two dollar,
Homestead I take like de res;
Viskey, big veddin', vite collar,
Goddam good country, I guess—
Me that 'ave bin what I've bin.

THE HOMESTEADER

My faders bin dis contré long tam,
Dey build up dis great Canadaw,
But dey don' know noddin' jus' de sam,
'Bout dis great lan' Saskatch'-Albertaw.
Dat Kebec she was get plenty full up,
No land for the man dat got none;
So we marry, Marie, an' we pull up
For de plains, where she go down de sun—
Me that 'ave bin what I've bin.

I that spent years in an office,
Swallowing room-stilted air,
Narrowing chest till my cough is
The graveyard jest everywhere;
Thirty-six inches expanded,
Sinuous, tough, hale and brown,
I nearly died when I first landed,
But I've played it out to a show-down—
Me that 'ave bin what I've bin.

My parents were slaves down in Georgia—
They wandered despised through the land,
From the south, to the woods where Britannia
Has sheltered a host of the brand.
Here refuge, freedom, and plenty,
With kin for ten miles on each side,
In joy we sing songs of old Dixie,
Where in bondage our forefathers died—
Me that 'ave bin what I've bin.

THE HOMESTEADER

A slip saw me enter the gaol gates
Five years in dire sorrow I toiled,
Broken-spirited, hopeless, with world-hate,
I saw every good effort foiled.
I came to forget on God's prairie,
Men took me for what I was worth,
I'm a school trustee, councillor, J.P.,
I've a wife, home, and nice slice of earth—
Me that 'ave bin what I've bin.

I fled, but a boy in my teens,
From my country's hard militarist yoke,
From the profitless drilling, that means
The chain of a youth's best years broke.
We are many upon this great vast,
The free land that feeds us we love,
When the might-have-been-vain years are past,
I've a homestead I earned as I strove—
Me that 'ave bin what I've bin.

We have come from the ends of the earth,
From all peoples, all classes, all kinds,
And each in his means proves his worth,
In a hard life that tempers and grinds.
Oh, land of great promise fulfilled!
Oh, Homestead Land, weak are made strong;
Faltering, tired souls are thrilled;
We hail thee, a homemaking throng—
We that 'ave bin what we've bin.

BACHELOR HOMESTEADING

Do you want to know the life, my boy, that's life from
start to end,
The life that shows what's in you, and makes every
man a friend,
The life that takes you out beyond the years' allotted
span,
That picks you up, and wrings you through, and turns
you out a man?

It's Homesteading.

Oh it's rip, rip, ripping through the virgin prairie sod,
Turning up the rich black loam fresh from the hands
of God,
Stabled in a cabin boxen, chumming with a team of
oxen—

But that's only one phase of the Homestead
Life.

You've got to be your housewife, and your laundress,
and your cook,
And batching ain't a bit like what you read of in a
book,
The dishes washed up once a week, a clean shirt when
it rains,
And your joy-rags in the grip-sack with the used-to-be
remains—

That's Homesteading.

Oh, it's slip, slap, slapping with a dishrag and a mop,
Juggling round with pots and pans, and calling pigs to
slop,
And for man to live alone, it's not good, you'll quickly
own—

But that's only one phase of the Homestead
Life.

BACHELOR HOMESTEADING

You'll chuckle when the spring comes, and the frogs
begin to croak;
In the sun's warm rays you'll thank your stars you're
not a city bloke;
And then the colts and calves come and you see your
wealth increase,
And you sow your hard-earned grain and hope the
frost will take no lease—
That's Homesteading.

Oh, it's slush, slush, slushing through the juicy April
mud,
Wagon stuck in gumbo while the oxen chew their cud;
Packing through an icy sea, pork and flour, sugar,
tea—
But that's only one phase of the Homestead
Life.

It's the riding of the grub line gets a bachelor all the
time,
And the way they metamorphose flour's a gastronomic
crime;
A man begins to reason when above a day's hard toil
He has to light a fire, and cook, and make the kettle
boil—
That's Homesteading.

Oh, it's mix, mix, mixing dough till inner man rebels,
Raving o'er the menus of the Edmonton hotels;
Dough-gods, devil-dodgers, become steady yearly
lodgers—
But that's only one phase of the Homestead
Life.

BACHELOR HOMESTEADING

You work all through the summer from the morn
until the night,
You see your face a-turning brown, your muscles
getting tight,
You hay amid the speargrass till you're itching like
a dog,
Then you hit for town and grub pile with the wheels
araising fog—

That's Homesteading.

Oh, it's bump, bump, bumping over prairie turtle-back,
Rumping over corduroy till muscles ache and rack,
But you wouldn't change your seat, for a city flivver
neat—

But that's only one phase of the Homestead
Life.

Then the harvest when you garner what the hail and
frost have left,
When you're either feeling jolly or you're mightily
bereft,
When you rise before the daylight, and toil on past
sunset flush,
Whilst the binder and the reaper desecrate the prairie
hush—

That's Homesteading.

Oh, it's pitch, pitch, pitching sheaves in several kinds
of din,
Stacking 'gainst the early snow, and hauling grain to
bin;
Wheat at thirty bushels per, round your heart creates
a stir—

But that's only one phase of the Homestead
Life.

BACHELOR HOMESTEADING

Then the winter closes round you and you hear the
blizzard's song.

You tread a path from shack to barn, the days are
twice as long;

You sit and curse, and wonder if the game is worth the
while,

And whether prairie pros or cons can stack the bigger
pile —

That's Homesteading.

Oh it's curse, curse, cursing at the days that are to let,
Aching hours of longing, speculation and regret,
Wonder that this lonely hell ever had for you a
spell--

But that's only one phase of the Homestead
Life.

But the woods' life's not all hardship, it has its gala
days,

When you resurrect your glad-rags, and make Old
Nature gaze;

You celebrate t' the limit for the time that's gone
before,

And you stock up cheer to last you for the next three
months or more—

That's Homesteading.

Oh, it's hop, hop, hopping at an old-time country
dance,

Shiny hair well-parted, and a crease right down your
pants;

"Get your partners, do-ci-do, swing 'em round for all
you know"—

But that's only one phase of the Homestead
Life.

BACHELOR HOMESTEADING

And then the time you prove up when you've fought
the fight, and won

The title to a square half-mile of continent, that's spun
Since creation, pure, unsullied, waiting for your heart
and hand.

You take it virgin, and it's yours to prosper and ex-
pand—

That's Homesteading.

Oh it's prove, prove, proving up with all a winner's
pride,

Proving that you're worth the land, and many things
beside;

For Manhood comes apace with the winning of the
race—

But that's only one phase of the Homestead
Life.

Just some phases picked at random from a year with
changes rife,

For every day's a new one in the bachelor homestead
life;

Times of hope and disappointment, aching fear, and
dark despair,

But 'neath it all you feel it's Life—primeval, real,
and square—

That's Homesteading.

Oh it's live, live, living out creation's ordinance,

Living clean and honest on a God-given expanse;

The sloven ways you keep, would doubtless make
your mother weep—

But Man is made of phases of the Homestead
Life.

SPRING

A day of softened lights and balmy air,
A calm, and quiet, and sober radiancy,
A day of subtle promise, everywhere
Expectancy.

The west's grey clouds uplift,—a streak of blue
Along the skyline spreads in steady march,
And ever rounding in your wond'ring view
A Chinook arch.

A path at night that's soft as summer's kiss,
'The rhythmic dripping of the eaves at morn,
A sun that's warm as August blaze, and this
A season born.

Bright limpid pools of newly melted snow,
A blade of green grass 'mid its sun-browned kin,
The creeks' and coulees' roaring freshet flow,
And echoed din.

A snow bird in a tree a song's begun,
A mallard cleaves the air with mottled wing,
A sodden gopher's drying in the sun,
And lo! 'tis spring.

THE HOMESTEAD TRAIL

Can you leave it? won't it haunt you? can you e'er
escape its spell?

Won't your visions and your memories prevail?

Won't it wind within your fancy and your aching
heart compel

Your feet to seek again the Homestead Trail?

After living life primeval, just as Nature meant you to,

Having proved your worth and that of others too,

Can you go away and leave it for a city's sordid whirl?

Just think of all the Trail has meant to you.

Oh the ragged, winding, jolting, toiling Trail,

And the ever changing vista of the West,

The way that wends throughout a thousand
dreams,

And lures the dreamer on the Homestead Quest.

Can you e'er forget the grandeur—far-flung valleys,
rimless plain,

Dizzy mountains, mighty rivers, coulees steep,

With the trail eternal turning, ever changing hour
by hour,

As each prospect sets afresh the heart aleap;

The cosy little homesteads, blackened stovepipes
through the roof,

The simple, honest folk you used to know,

The whole world yours to play with, every man you
meet a friend,

And existence just a happy careless flow.

Oh the glory of the days upon the Trail,

For you blissful of the Red Gods' chosen few;

The glowing hopes conceived and dreams a-born

When a wagon box is Arcadie to you.

THE HOMESTEAD TRAIL

It ambles over prairie pocked with myriad gopher
mounds,

Where the crafty badger lazes in the sun;

It twists and turns through park-like woods where
spruce and tamarac

Cast shadows over moose or red deer run;

It follows rounded hoof-made paths that buffalo have
trod,

It circles many an old-time teepee town;

The faith and hope of pioneers have hollowed out the sod
And pine logs of the corduroy laid down.

Oh, the vision of the prairie from the Trail,

The bald, brown stretches that blue skies
embrace,

The awe that reverential strikes you dumb—

You but an atom in unending space.

It awaits you in the morning roused by wild orchestral
strains,

Thin yellow sunbeams struggle through the trees,

And still keen air sets burning silver coursing through
your blood

As you wade in dew-wet grass up to your knees.

There's joy in every movement as you harness up
your team,

And the lank cayuses seem to feel it too,

For all the wild is calling, calling out to its elect

To get out upon the Trail and Nature woo.

Oh, the early morning start upon the Trail!

Black camp fire embers mark that you have
passed—

A new day looms before you with its thrills—

What the Red Gods hold for you is never
forecast.

THE HOMESTEAD TRAIL

The noon sun pours down pitiless from out a tranquil
sky,

Chill evening breezes presage coming night,
Fierce torrents that you cannot face make wheel ruts
rushing streams

Or on the Trail the blizzard sets its blight.
In Indian summer's tranquil calm that heralds winter's
reign,

When early snow lies powdery on the ground,
Every phase of weather holds for you a different Trail
each day

And the joy of life in every one you've found.

Oh the ever-changing skies upon the Trail!

The Trail you love in every freak and whim,

And learn to take the hardships for the joys,

To drink the cup of living to the brim.

Can you e'er forget the subtle, magic perfumes of the
trail—

That earthy smell that blows from new-turned sod,
The aromatic scent of pine, sweet silver-willow's
breath,

Fresh-mown hay, the prairie rose, the golden rod.

And the galaxy of colors that despair the artist's
brush—

The greens, the greys, the browns, the whites of
snow,

The purple of the timothy, the blue of flaxen bloom,

Great bursting sunsets, wheatfields' golden glow.

Oh, it grips your seven senses, does the Trail!

And every one of them can torture you,

And breath or glimpse can conjure up again

Undying pictures of the life you knew.

THE HOMESTEAD TRAIL

The camp you made at nightfall when long shadows
closed your day

And you dragged the harness from your toiling team,
Then built a fire and cooked in coyote yappings from
the hill

While unseen wild things rustled in the gleam;
In the dark the stealthy padding round about the
dying glow,

The sougning of the boughs above your head,
A thousand scents that waft across from meadow,
prairie, wood,

To sanctify your lonely pine-bough bed.

Oh, the cosy little camp upon the Trail!

Through roof of branches from a star-specked
dome

Bright moonbeams pierce the lacework of the leaves
And shed dull light upon the camper's home.

You will come back in the springtime, follow north the
mallard's flight,

The wild-goose honk will summon you again;
For there's no content or resting when the Red Gods
send the call,

You but struggle 'gainst their summoning in vain.
No earthly bonds can hold you when the harbingers
of springtime

From the blue-green tops of pines send out the hail,
And once its mark is on you you can never, never
leave it—

Get out again and tread the Homestead Trail,

You will ever hear it calling you—the Trail !

No matter where strange fancies make you roam,
Soon memories will turn your weary feet

In the way that leads back to your cabin home.

THE SURVEYOR

Above the lake the summer moon was rising,
Dark lay the pool below;
A loon, our doleful mission quick surmising,
Rose up in mocking flow.

Through stately pines a gentle breeze was sighing,
While in the gusty air
The pungent scent of balsam, sanctifying,
Embalmed his sepulchre.

The moonbeams fell upon us, sadly toiling,
Too deep for worded speech;
Funereal waves set by the light breeze droiling,
Muffled upon the beach.

A fair-haired son of London's teeming torrent,
Wandered to Nature's breast,
Who saw through transit sight an old-world current
Be-peopling that West;

Light of the gang, the joy of trail and camp-fire,
Gamest throughout the fight,
Now there he lay upon tarpaulin pyre,
Blasted by dynamite.

THE SURVEYOR

We buried him beneath a diamond willow,
His transit by his side,
A rough-cut slab we laid upon his pillow—
“Here a surveyor died.”

A sunlight streak shed gold upon the water
As back to camp we filed;
Another day'd begun for nature-slaughter—
The harnessing the wild.

Oh you who by that lone grave gaily travel
West to Pacific's shore,
Think of the men who gave life to unravel
The roads to Western store

A CAR ON THE RANCH

Things was becomin' kinder quiet on the Bar-4 ranch
that spring,
There hadn't a darned thing happened there since
Sandy Cranston's wedding,
And that affair went sorter slow, for Shorty's team took
fright,
An' loosened the peg of the biggest keg,—but the dew
was strong that night.

So when a new foreman comes^r our way, a highbrow
from back east,
We tightens our cinches, so to speak, an' prepares for
a regular feast,
A farm school maverick he was, with a scientific spiel,
A joy-rag aroma, a college diploma, an' a new model
automobile.

Just fancy an auto on the range with a broncho bunch
for choice,
A bald-headed, bog-spavined, wash-machine, ever
raising its gasolined voice;
The steers went locoed, commenced to stampede, when
Smithy came snorting along,
An' the bronks went bug when they heard the chug,
an' we each said his evensong.

You bet we fixed it P.D.Q. that thing u'd have to
vamoose,
For every darned cayuse on the place just bucked like
all hell turned loose,
We talked of ways 'an plans by day, we dreamed out
schemes at night—
Some but hazy, most plumb crazy, an' none of them
just right.

A CAR ON THE RANCH

Well, the rainy season struck us hard about the first
of June,
An' filled the sloughs chuck full of juice, the trail—
one lone stewed prune;
It was sorter hard on the gas machine, an' Smith had
to stay inside,
We give him a steed that we'd all agreed the devil
himself couldn't ride.

One day the weather let up a bit an' Smith guessed
he'd take a spin;
He tightened the cinch on the automobile an' gazed
at its gizzard within;
We all saw him off from the big corral gate—the car
made a pretty deep track,
He broke in at dinner, lookin' quite a bit thinner, an'
said he had hoofed it back.

"Well, boys," he adds, "my auto's stuck about five
miles from here,
You'd best saddle up an' bring your ropes, an' I guess
we'll pull her clear."

A wink went round as he said this—I scarce could hide
a grin;
We bolted our grub an' hit for the scrub, so anxious
was we to begin.

The car was settled good an' tight, you'd 'er thought
that there it growed;
We snubbed on axles, trees, an' springs, an- every part
that showed;
And you uv course can see that we wus on destruction
bent,
But there would'nt 'er been such a sweet-scented scene
if Smith hadn't hastened th' event.

A CAR ON THE RANCH

Soon all available lariats was tied to that automobile,
While a semi-circle of half-broke bronks danced the
Old Virginia reel,
Then before we knows what's happenin' old Smith is
round in front,
An' turned the crank uv the perfume tank, an' the
thing's begun to grunt.

At the first chug-chug my pony tried to punch a hole
in the sky,
And as I come down to earth again many objects
went wingin' by,
There was sounds uv rendin' an' cussin, an' pieces of
car flyin' round—
My bronk hit for China, with a front wheel behin'
her, an' kickin' at every rebound.

Shorty Mac passed me as I raced along—on his rope
was a piece of the seat;
At the c'rral we dismounted an' sat on the bars, an' to
watch them come in was a treat;
There was all kinds of fancy ridin', like a Stampede at
Medicine Hat,
Then Smithy strolled in, he was cussin' like sin, an'
nigh wept in his silken cravat.

They say every story's a moral, an' to this one the
one is, I guess,
That things is all right in their places—outside they
are apt to get into a mess;
Smith was plumb fine with his car in the town, to
bring it West was a fool notion;
Now HE rides a horse, an' it's natural, uv course, he's
death on that gasoline motion.

ASLEEP ON THE PRAIRIE

As dusk steals o'er the prairie, and cool breezes
Sweep through the grass and deep-leafed poplar
grove,

And the hour of stillness creeps on tired nature,
I make my bed 'neath Heaven's blue alcove.

I wrap my blanket round me, and my saddle
I place with coat upon it at my head;
My broncho browses quietly at his picket,
The last rays of the setting sun shine red.

The fireflies light up their tiny lanterns,
And roustering frogs begin their revellings;
On the hill a lone cayoté bays the moon,
And many sounds arise from many dwellings.

A quietness, and yet there is no quiet,
A solitude, yet not alone am I;
An awe-inspiring calm that thrills and grips you
'Neath Nature's wild, harmonious lullaby.

The perfume of the sagebrush blows across me,
The creek's incessant babbling fills my ears,
And here I lay me down to sleep till morning,
'Mid Nature's beauties, calm, and know no fears.

THE LURE OF THE WESTLAND

Where the waters of the Blindman meet the Red
Deer with a roar,

Where the grim and mighty canyon goes to meet the
northern shore,

There's a shack built outer spruce logs, there's a barn
an' log corral,

An' there uster be a rail fence round the little yard as
well;

That uster be my homestead there, I filed in nineteen-
two,

And I pulled up stakes an' beat it with my patent crisp
an' new.

An' now I'm longin', longin'—I can hear the
Blindman roar,

I can see the spruce-lined canyon as it slopes
towards the shore,

An' the West is callin', callin', an' it's there that
I would be,

On the cutbank of the Red Deer with the blue sky
over me.

Them three years seemed the hardest that I ever
wandered through,

I forgot the fall an' summer when the icy blizzards
blew,

I'd get up in the morning with my grub all frozen
hard,

An' curse the luck that brought me to this devil's own
playyard.

Then spring would come, the snow would go, the
meadow-lark would sing,

An' I'd thank my stars I'd stuck it as I made the
ploughshare ring.

THE LURE OF THE WESTLAND

An' now I'm longin', longin'—I can smell the
earth an' hay,

I can hear the freshet churnin' as it bears the ice
away;

My heart is in the Westland, an' it's there I long
to be,

In my shack built outer spruce logs where the
rail fence uster be.

An' then came the hard winter, that's talked of yet
out West,

When the blizzards raged for days on end, an' piled
drifts to my chest;

I dreamed all day of crowded streets an' all the gaudy
show,

My time was up 'bout Christmas, an' I hit the trail of
snow.

I sold that God-forsaken piece of land in Calgary,
An' three years toil an' labor went in one week's
jamboree.

An' now I'm longin', longin', for it wasn't always
cold;

The fields 'ud turn from white to green, from
green to yellow-gold;

I feel the lure of spring-time, an' its callin',
callin' me

To where the woods are buddin', an' the air is
wild an' free.

THE LURE OF THE WESTLAND

An' now I'm pluggin' daily in a land of fog an' smoke —
Breathin' air that's nearly lifeless makes a feller cough
an' choke,
An' I 'member how the west wind uster come up from
the plain
With the scent uv spruce an' poplar minglin' with
the smell uv rain;
An' how I'd sit at sunset 'neath the Balm of Gilead
tree,
An' from the slough the silver-willow sent its perfume
up to me.

An' now I'm longin', longin', for the sounds and
smells of spring,
I can hear the frogs a-croakin', an' the yellow-
hammer sing;
An' my heart is in the Westland, an' it's there
that I would be,
Watchin' sunset on the river from beneath the
old Balm tree.

This fightin' don't help any—I got to go back there,
An' friends an' home can't hold me when the call is in
the air;
I've learnt what others told me, that once you've
known the West
No other place can charm you—there ain't no peace
nor rest.
I'm goin' back in the springtime, buddin' trees will
welcome me;
When the Westland calls, you got to go—it's the
lonely trail for me.

THE LURE OF THE WESTLAND

An' now I'm goin'. goin'. I must heed the West-
land's call,
Bank to the land where life is life, and man is no
one's thrall;
There's somethin' drives you from it, an' there's
somethin' drags you back—
I'd leave comfort, love, an' riches for that mud-
chinked shack.

THE GRAMOPHONE

You may talk about piano and banjo,
Of the joys of violins that nearly speak,
But when your hands are horny, stiff and slow,
And mind and body fresh resistance seek,
You don't possess the spirit nor the vim
To conjure music with your hand and brain,
But the gramophone's a wizard through the heat
wave and the blizzard,
And can ruffled play through night's dire reign.

You've swabbed the supper dishes and the rest,
You've seen the horses bedded for the night,
And as a lone owl shrieks upon his quest,
You settle down within the logs' dim light,
Then you turn the crank and slowly fill your pipe,
You've booked your ticket for the Land-that-was—
For there's more within that trill than canned op'ra,
vaudeville,
It's the totem of Acadia—it's Because.

A shiver starts a-thrilling down your back,
Which travels till it reaches to your feet;
As soft waltz strains turn back the almanac,
You're swaying to the syncopated beat;
It comes back just as clear as clearest day,
The supper waltz with Her, that witching gown;
Glaring lights, the ball, the girl—it's the giddy, social
whirl—
Wake up! another record—it's run down.

THE GRAMOPHONE

The next a song your mother used to sing,
A simple little ballad of the home,
Sung to the beating of the nightbird's wing,
Or the lapping of the wavelets into foam,
Or in the calm of city's suburb eve,
To the sacred circle of a firelight's gleam;
No matter what your station, or your old-time avoca-
tion,
It's the same for all the West—Homeland's dream.

The song she sang that evening in the moonlight,
When first you learned to know a maiden's kiss;
A quickstep, and you're on another dream-flight,
You were out with Maudie K. when you heard this.
You can check your life off in the different vogues,
Till when you bought your music ready-made,
But music you must have—it's the blight-balm, it's
soul-salve,
It's the goading spur that keeps you on the grade.

There's the songs that went with dress suits and
white shirts,
The treble of the prima-donna's flight,
The chorus with the swish of ballet skirts,
The raggy songs with cocktails at midnight,
The songs you sang at twilight 'way back home,
In the fields and lanes of fair Ontario;
No matter who you are, if you've left and wandered
far,
There's music in all that you used to know.

THE GRAMOPHONE

And so you turn the crank, for you the rack,
It's the pleasant kind of pain that lures you on,
And you move back year by year upon life's track,
Before the toiling years to days ago;
Soft waltzes, country ballads, college songs,
The tunes so recherché and do-ci-do,
Mingled joy and agony in each wakened memory,
Life again in painted funnel's rhythmic flow.

It's all that was 'fore life was mere existence,
Your toiling years stacked to a total sum,
As it cheerily plays on in calm insistence,
'Mid blizzard's howling or mosquito's hum.
It's Town, it's Home, it's Life, it's Memory—
It's all that ever Might-have-been or Was,
It's the Dreams of Long Ago, it's the everlasting No,
It's the totem of Acadia—it's Because.

on,
ack,

y,

REGRET

Oh, for the hours that have winged by,
Days that have floated along;
Wasted, unprofitable, unfilled,
Flown like an idle song.

g No,

Bitterly think how they might have wrought
Harvest of dreams they sowed;
Gone, alas! and nought remains
But the long, regretful road.

ONE HOMESTEADER RETURNED

I thought I wanted Life again and home,
The whirring pleasures of a city gay,
Existence smooth, with clean things everyday,
I was sick of mucking in the clay and loam.

"Fate never meant a being like me," I said,
"To waste his days upon a homestead drear;
In this hard solitude a man is dead,
I'll get me to a madder, gentler sphere."

I went; six months I've stayed, distraught, and awed
It isn't real—I've played it all right through;
The men and women aren't the ones I knew—
Civilization's just a gilded fraud.

I think nor feel as once I used to do,
I stayed too long—there's only one life now;
I'd trade all this if I could start anew,
And feel my hands once more upon the plough.

O God! but what is pleasure, wealth and love?
The only love is calling o'er the sea;
A lonely little shack keeps haunting me—
A western wood where catbirds scream above.
And as I sit and dream about it all,
My heart throbs, and my head goes hot and swims;
I rush bareheaded out to heed the call,
To smell the night, and view th' horizon brims.

But instead of moonlit prairie and the sweet
Dank scent of dew-wet grass, and calm profound,
And a yellow-lighted skyline all around,
Nought but tall houses and a long, long street.
Moonbeams are pitiful, and dim they burn,
The air is thick, and throbs with clashing tones,
I rush distracted, everywhere I turn,
Dark, dreary dwellings, and the cold, cold stones.

ED

WOMAN HUNGER

Three years I've toiled and labored, and a homestead
now is mine;

A piece of mother earth to call my own;

I'm monarch of all the land I see, as I open the cabin
door.

To the cutbank of the creek it's mine alone;

Those waving fields of golden grain, the pastures
green and high,

And that rugged willow butte with poplared throne.

I staked my grit and dollars 'gainst this piece of
prairie land,

Three long hard years I stuck it, and I've won;

And a feeling of affection overcame me sitting here,

Just finishing my day out in the sun,

A sort of love for the old place, and 'fore I knew
I'd said,

"This little old log shack is Home, my son."

The sun was just a-sinking, and his needles o'er the
butte

Turned the sagebrush on the hill to snowy white;

The clouds had turned to silver, and a night-hawk
from the sky

Whirred earthward right across the blinking light;

The creek alone was noisy as he gurgled right along,

Just he and I alone unscared by night.

WOMAN HUNGER

I got thinking as I sat there wishing for some human
thing,

Some other eyes to share that golden flush,
How the happy voice of childhood would cheer up
this cabin home,
And their noisy laugh break up this awful hush.
This three years' fight with Nature must have turned
me into man,
I can whisper it aloud without a blush.

I have felt the woman-hunger of the lonely northern
wilds,

I've dealt in dreams that shack walls couldn't
hold;
Through the lonely nights of summer, and the winter's
long, long days,
I've read of maids as novelists have told,
And the girls on the magazine covers, the new year's
almanac,
And the mail house catalogue, have framed my
mould.

It comes most any sort of time, but strikes the hardest
in

Those drear nights of the never-ending kind,
When there's only you in vastness—nought to do but
make up dreams,
And ponder on the seasons put behind.
And anything can rouse it when you're sick and lorn
and blue—
A writer's picture, and your dream's enshrined.

WOMAN HUNGER

I've dreamed just how 'twould be to have a wife with
breakfast on

When I come in from the barn all caked in ice;
A woman's face above the table right across from me,
And grub I haven't had to cook up twice;
Someone to fetch me slippers when I come in wet from
chores,

This junk-shed straightened out and fixed up nice;

A woman to turn toil to joy, and pain mirth for her
sake,

To fill my soul again plumb full of vim;
A partner always ready with a willing heart and head,
When the bowl of trouble's running o'er the brim;
A friend to soothe and comfort when it gets the best
of me,
A comrade when the prairie lights grow dim.

Then as I mix the batter for the flapjacks on the stove,
And icicles drop sizzling from my cheeks,
I laugh, and softly curse myself for all the wasted
hours—

Through night-made visions toiling daylight rips;
The homestead is a place of facts, of teeming Things-
that-are—

I've had so many dreamings torn in strips.

WOMAN HUNGER

And those pure-souled, brain-shaped women are far
from this lonely shack,

Far from this tousled room, this medley life,
This shaggy, ragged being, with bronzed visage, rough,
unshaved,

Far from the burdens of a homestead's strife.
There's so many men far better—yet a Man's soul
dwells in here,

And man, God-built, ordained to crave for wife.

And there's a voice e'er ready in the lonesome, linger-
ing hours—

“A woman's love is compassless as sky;
The pioneering women, mothers of the new-born lands,
Are the purest gems, God-given to fortify.
And twin-souls is no fable, in the woman-hunger
hours

There's somebody sighs with you as you sigh.”

THE FIRST DAYS OF SPRING

Oh! the glory of the days
When the sun's bright ruddy rays
Send adrift the sparkling snows upon the ground,
When the fields are icy seas,
And there's mud up to your knees,
And the flooding creek drown every other sound.

Slushing round in rubber boots,
'Mid the upturned poplar roots,
Whistling as you feel the sunlight through your
shirt;
Hopping round alert and brisk,
Digging out the plough and disc,
In the sweet aroma of the freshened earth.

When the spring's first songster comes,
When the partridge beats his drums,
And the dripping gopher crawls from 'neath the
sod,
You abjure the oath you swore
In mid-winter's blizzard roar,
To return unto a country known of God.

As you hear the creek a-boiling,
When you busily sit toiling
In a shack high filled with harness, bolts and screws,
Once more is life worth living;
You're light-hearted and forgiving;
Once more the West has gripped you in her thews.

LOCOED MULLOY

Mulloy came to Alberta in the spring of ninety-nine
To prove up all the tales he'd heard of land "acrost
the line";

He'd dwelt in thirteen different states, and cursed
each one in turn,

One of them was Missouri, which was why he had to
learn.

He set out from Wetaskiwin with the wherewithal to
bake,

And squatted on a homestead on the shore of Pigeon
Lake;

A quarter thick with poplar and the stately tamarac,
And where the rainbow sun went down he built a little
shack.

And there he settled down to chop, and grub, and clear
the land,

Setting out his winter garden in the fertile golden
strand.

The waters were his grub stake, satisfied his every
wish,

And he dined on teal and mallard; winter diet—frozen
fish.

In the days of spring and summer he strove hard from
morn till night,

Working till the blink of sunset, rising at the dawn of
light,

Cutting down the birch and poplar in their verdant
summer hues,

Hauling the cayuse's fodder from the banks of arid
sloughs.

LOCOED MULLOY

And so until the snow came sweated toil filled up his
days,
And left no room for lonesomeness or dreary thoughts
that craze.
He'd sit outside his cabin as the sun set o'er the lake,
And left its glowing colors on the ripples in its wake,
And listen to the mallard call across unto its mate,
Or the loon's harsh mocking laughter, or the jackfish
feeding late.
He visited the Nitchies on the Pigeon's southern
shore
Till the tribe was quite contented he was picking him a
squaw.

But when cold winter settled round and snowed him in
his shack,
And he was forced to keep his stove well filled with
tamarac,
The long days pressed upon him, chafed his spirit,
smote his mind,
And set his brain to dwelling on the sweets of human-
kind.
And when his tasks were over he would huddle o'er the
fire,
And dwell upon the life that was, had been, and was
up higher;
The wolves would howl around him, screaming like a
funeral knell,
And the dire days stretched before him like an ever-
lasting hell.

LOCOED MULLOY

One February morning after sleeping round the
clock,
He rose bedazed and grouchy, donned his overalls and
smock,
Cursing at the fate that led him, railing at his lonely
life,
Longing for some human friendship, almost wishing
he'd a wife,
Then plunged his way through snowdrift with his rope
and water pail,
Down the bank unto the ice-hole in the Pigeon's cup-
like vale,
Where the sun's rays gently shining through a mist
upon the ice,
Made the snow-clad dale to sparkle like a jewelled
paradise.

But as he stood there holding out the pail to his
cayuse,
He started, rapped his head, "My God! at last the
works is loose!"
For there, majestic sailing in the middle of the lake,
Was a full four-masted schooner, e'en to riplots in its
wake;
It glided swiftly, lightly, from the east strand to the
west,
Then vanished into ether at the tamarac's green crest;
And left the man there staring, rubbing mucus from
his eyes,
And looking as a dog looks on the day before he dies.

LOCOED MULLOY

Mulloy stood shaking, quaking, with the ague in his knees.

"It's months since I've had whiskey, so I know it ain't D.T.'s,

It's all this cursed lonesomeness, it's set my works a-wrong;

I'm bughouse! it's the looney-home for mine 'fore very long.

Great suffering cats! but I must keep my head entire till spring,

When I can hit the Brandon trail and get it in a sling.

I'll sweat, I'll toil, I'll drudge, I'll moil, I'll work to beat the band,

I'll never think another thought whilst in this hellish land.

Until the time when spring should come and banish winter's curse,

He set right out to slave and toil, his malady to nurse.

From the morning's early sunbeams that came nearer north each day,

Till when he dropped from weariness as setting rays turned grey,

He tramped on willow snowshoes 'neath the tamaracs' green wall,

And sped across the lake's white tracts till he could barely crawl;

He learnt to know the air-holes where the moose and red deer drank,

And the places where the lynx and wolf kept watch upon the bank.

LOCOED MULLOY

He hewed at timber till his limbs rebelled in aching
pain,
He mused through snow to set out traps in many
hoof-trod lane;
He fished down through the water-hole till moccasins
froze tight,
He toiled each day and strove by moil to ease the
mental blight;
He labored till his muscles were as tired as his brain,
Then sadly mused back homewards planning mor-
row's work amain;
Dined at his evening meal of meagre, solitary food,
Then bed, and earnest striving baneful thinking to
exclude.

Yet the longsome toil and labor, and the fight 'gainst
dreary thought
Seemed powerless 'gainst the havoc winter lonesome-
ness had wrought.
'Mid the ice glare in the morning, as he filled his water
pail,
He saw strange phantom visions—shrunk to nought
the icy dale,
A densely peopled city, with its lofty spires held high,
In the night the white-capped Rockies seemed to
leap and come up nigh;
And men he'd see, not Indians, but the real white
humankind,
That vanished from his brain cells as he frantic
rushed behind.

LOCOED MULLOY

It was in the end of April as the snow began to go.
And Mulloy was worn to skin and bones, a mere
phantasmic show,
When a North-West Mounted policeman visiting the
Cree reserve,
In a coyote chase upon the lake espied the smoky curve.
He reached the shack by sunset to the lonely man's
great fright,
Who had watched in dread the progress of this visitant
of night;
But when he'd learnt 'twas flesh and blood his gladness
knew no bounds,
He sputtered, stammered, speech became but mere
spasmodic sounds.

When suppertime was over and the flapjacks all
consumed,
In the light of poplar logs that scarce the little hut
illumed,
Mulloy filled a long empty pipe and started on his tale
Of the curse of northern solitude, the toll that winters
claim.
"Bughouse!" he cried; "I'm madder yet than any man
that's born;
I've seen visions all through winter, on every sunny
morn
There's been cities, boats, and mountains doin' hell
stunts on the lake—
It's been D.T.'s for five months' stretch; one blasted
big, long snake."

LOCOED MULLOY

The mouny backed toward the door as he began to
speak,
A finger moved a trigger to a most suggestive squeak
But as Mulloy's dire tale went on a smile spread o'er
his face,
The grin turned into laughter, and the laughter grew
apace.
"You poor old cuss," he cried at length, "your cranium
is not cracked,
Your visions were no fancies, but a scientific fact,
The visioned things and people, your dire winter's
entourage,
Are but the mirrored wonders of a natural mirage."

THE HOUR OF STILLNESS

When the sun sets o'er the foothills,
And the twilight shadows fall,
 And the ruddy golden gleams slant through the
 trees,
Sudden calm enfolds the woodland,
Busy nature takes its rest,
 And silent is the sougning of the breeze.

There's not a wild thing to be seen,
The squirrel quiets his scold,
 The partridge lies close hidden in the brush;
And the timid deer, where are they?
Crafty lynx and swift coyote,
 And the birds that gaily sang at sunset flush?

You will seek but never find them
When the Hour of Stillness comes,
 Then the creatures of the wood all make a truce;
This hour is given to worship
The Creator of the wilds,
 Till Night his closing shadows doth produce.

THE HARD WINTER

The North-West makes its harvest, and it takes it of the
best,
The sturdy and the daring and the bravest in the quest
The freshing creeks and rivers and the snowdrifts
be their rest.

• • • • •

Pete Hanson was of Norway. You could see his viking
sires
In his herculean stature, in his thews' blue living wires,
In his blond good-natured person, in his pale blue
orbits' fires.

The lure of Westland charmed him, and he took a
homestead near
Where the Hand Hills' forty circling buttes above the
Red Deer rear,
A rough and rugged country as his Norway mountains
dear.

He sowed his little patch of grain, and broke up further
space;
The day the old mare foaled he put his shoulders to the
trace
And homeward lugged the hay, the gelding's step
and his apace.

So winter came, and settlers then will tell you of it yet,
The "Hard Winter" still they call it, old-timers can't
forget
Its ruin, desolation, sowing seeds of decade debt.

THE HARD WINTER

The blizzards raged for days on end, a cruel, killing
blast,
And half-distracted parents prayed the flour and meal
might last
Till the man could take the trail again, when the
slaying fiend had passed.

'Twas risk to go from shack to barn, beyond a slow
death lay,
For the seething, blinding monster swallowed all in
demon play,
And north was south, and noontide night, and shelter
lay—which way?

The cattle died like flies in June, for men could haul no
hay,
And range stock froze right in their tracks and stood
there stiff in May—
Mottled bodies in the willows 'mid a host of magpies
gay.

Pete Hanson in his cabin huddled close beside the fire,
While day by day the snowdrift piled upon the roof the
higher,
Each week he added stove-pipe joints as each would
soon retire.

At morn he had to dig a trench from door to light and
air,
And there a vastness he beheld, all level, white and
bare,
And starving coyotes came up close with the courage
of despair.

THE HARD WINTER

He hungered for the fellowship and sight of human
kind,

He sang by hour the old folk-songs to ease a quaking
mind,

He lost track of the dreary days and weeks he put
behind.

The rabbits formed his grub stake, and he trapped
'till hands would freeze;

The snow in drifts came to his chest, the level to his
knees;

And so he brilt to travel on, from spruce, his native
skis.

One day of blazing sunshine turned his eyes to sightless
glass,

He groped all day in darkness through the chilling
white morass,

Till at eve he fell across his fence—a weak, half-frozen
mass.

Three days of cloudless sky and calm had come and
passed away,

And snowshoe rabbits still made up each meal-time's
scant array,

So he resolved to take the trail and make the store that
day.

He buckled on his skis and started out with giant stride
Across the solitary tract, bleak, bare, horizon-wide;
He headed for the little store, but instinct for a guide.

THE HARD WINTER

The meeting with his fellow-man filled Pete with joy
 profound,
He talked in streaks, heard month's-old news, and
 swallowed every sound,
He treated all the company to cider three times round.

The fleeting afternoon brought sullen clouds and
 darkened sky,
A dimming mist of grey-white specks, a pregnant
 Arctic sigh,
The vanguard of the furies, all-piercing, bitter-dry.

And then Pete fastens on his skis—"Well, boys, I
 must be going!"

One says, "You must be bughouse, Pete; this ain't
 no ord'nary snowing,
In a second she'll be whooping, d'yer see the way she's
 blowing?"

But Pete, he laughed and heaved a sack of flour on his
 back;

"I guess I beat the storm, boys, yust shove up on this
 pack!"

And the wind meanwhile blew fiercer, and the sky
 turned inky black.

They all stood round and argued. "You're as crazy
 as a bug;"

"I'll make a shake-down on the floor, an' you'll be
 warm an' snug."

But he shook the pack up higher as he gave a massive
 shrug.

THE HARD WINTER

"I got to feed them horses," and he pulled the heavy door;

They crowded round, and pulled him back, and at him cursed and swore.

He jerked them off and glided out into the blizzard roar.

"You're a damn fool, Pete"—"You'll get plumb lost"—
—"You'll fall out there'an croak";

"Aw, hell, so long! I know you, boys! it's yust your little yoke."

As he coughed the last few words the ice-whirl took him 'neath its cloak.

* * * * *

The drear, hard winter lingered on 'mid ruin and despair.

With days of spring-like promise, hopes a-glowing everywhere,

To be blighted on the morrow with iced needles in the air.

'Twas in May the spring broke warmly like a heaven after hell,

And men who'd sworn to go away, felt kindling hearts impel

To try the great new promise, and to stay another spell.

A rancher rounding up his stock and counting winter's toll,

Came on Pete Hanson's horses, the mare with week-old foal,

One halter shank hung severed, one trailed a manger pole.

THE HARD WINTER

To that dire day, two months ago, his mind went
swiftly back,

He put the spurs to his cayuse—"Pete never reached
his shack";

At night he found the cabin, grim and silent, death-
like, black.

They searched a week for Hanson, travelled each
damp acre o'er;

Then a casual trailer found him to the *east* side of the
store,

Full eighteen miles from where above his shack the
Hand Hills soar.

His skis were doubled under him, he lay just as he fell;
His head was pillowed on his pack as if in dreamer's
spell;

His face was frozen in the smile that nothing could
dispel.

* * * * *

The North-West makes its harvest, and it takes it of
the best,

The sturdy and the daring, and the bravest in the
quest—

The freshing creeks and rivers and the snowdrifts be
their rest.

LONELINESS

What is it that I sigh for
In my shack among the trees ?
The red deer run by,
The rabbits come nigh,
The birds cross the sky,
And low sighs the breeze.

What is that feeling at twilight,
As I hie me home over the hill ?
The sun's in the west,
The squirrel at rest,
The bird in its nest,
All nature is still.

Why do I sit in the firelight glow,
And dwell on the days gone by ?
A grey owl hoots "who,"
And frogs in the slough,
Chant a lullaby too,
Yet dreary am I.

What is that pain in the innermost heart
As the weary nights extend ?
It's an aching mind
For the humankind,
Old ties that bind,
That we can't transcend.

THE SCARLET RIDERS

They ride from Manitoba to the Rockies in Alberta,
They ride from Athabasca to the sea,
You'll see red coats and jackboots where Mackenzie
River's churning,
They're just where you'd think or wouldn't
think they'd be;
They're ranging from Milk River to within the Arctic
circle,
There's Mounties on the shores of Hudson's Bay,
They're on the road to Dawson where the Yukon is
a-boiling,
At Port Nelson, Lac La Biche, and Chippewa.

You'll hear cayuses' hoofbeats where the Hereford is
ranging,
Where rustlers rove, bootleggers cache their spoils;
They've been calming down the Sarcees, feeding
Beavers on the Peace,
And lawless Eskimos have known their coils.
You'll find them driving huskies to the north of sixty-
five,
Mushing through the northern blizzard on patrol;
They're tiny little pinpoints on the face of No-Man's-
Land,
A "thin red line" from boundary to pole.

THE SCARLET RIDERS

They're the lost-and-found department for half a continent,

From snow-blind homesteaders to maverick steers;
There's nothing that's too big for them, and nought
for them too small,

They're a broad realm's chastening hand—its eyes
and ears.

They've been governing a country tremendous vast to
rule,

And they pulled it safely through its infancy,

And the marvel how they did it, earned the outlaws
deep respect,

Kept chummy with the Blackfoot and the Cree.

They're big men bronzed and grizzled, with the jaunty
saddle slouch,

Inured to all the toils of northern vasts,

Their only motto, "Get there, no matter what the
cost!"

And it all gets done without the trumpet blasts.

They're here and there and everywhere just seeing
things are right,

The Lone Patrol is miles of hill and dale;

The records show they're precious few, the country's
mighty large,

But you'll never fail to meet them on the trail.

MAIL DAY

Mail day in the forest, mail day on the plain,
Mail for farm and ranch and camp, mail day come
again;

Homestead's day of days, one or two a week,
Dragging you from plough and disc, through rain or
blizzard bleak.

Mail, Mail, Mail.

There's ponies, buggies, wagons, on the trail,
They've come from hill and flat for the weekly bit
of chat,

And the news of worlds beyond their little pale.

You chat a while and dally, you talk of hogs and grain,
You hear about the latest dance and speculate on rain;
You read your dunning letters, the others stow away,
They're too sacred for perusal in that hurried sort of
way.

Mail, Mail, Mail.

It's come from railroad over hill and dale,
There's the bills of no account, and epistles para-
mount,

That if they didn't come would strike you pale.

You've had your little gossip, you guess you'd better
hike

To the little shack that's hearth and home and much
more than you'd like;

You set your cayuse loping, then you pull him up to
slow,

And you read about the life-that-was, and things you
used to know.

Mail, Mail, Mail.

MAIL DAY

The words that for a minute lift the veil,
A scented note and curl from the dearest little girl,
And the weekly lines from home that never fail.

They bring back—oh, so clearly—the life that used to
be
Before the Red Gods lured you—was it really Fate's
decree?
You dream of things-that-were, and of all-that-might-
have-been,
Then your pony near unseats you as you fold the
"Passing Scene."

Mail, Mail, Mail.

The only links with home that yet prevail,
They freshen your ambition, keep you true to home
tradition,
Give you strength to fight the night frosts and the hail.

Now just a word to mother, to sister, fiancée,
Of the lonely men who stake their youth against the
West's array,
They're the mental food each week, these letters fresh
from home
To the men to whom the Red Gods called to leave all
love and roam.

Mail, Mail, Mail.

Put everything into it—every tale
Of the life he used to know before he joined the flow
Of the pioneers that blaze the homestead trail.

THE . . . OST

'Tis the last week of green August, and the moon is at
the full,

Dire sun dogs flecked the orb as low it sank;
Grey languid clouds float overhead, like flaked Angora
wool,

The air hangs heavy, ominous, and dank.

Will there be frost to-night?

The man is sitting huddled 'neath the garnished poplar
logs,

Dying embers cast a glamor o'er his face;
The pipe he grips is empty, and the vapor that befogs
Is the breath his heaving lungs expend apace.

Will there be frost to-night?

His restless eye goes roving out to where the wheat-
fields lie,

The grain that in a week should turn to gold;
It goes in mental vision round the homestead, then a
sigh,

And the stalwart face is anguish-drawn and old.

Will there be frost to-night?

He shivers as he rises, though it isn't with the cold,
And he strikes a light which mars night's mystic
state,

And moves across to where, in narrow markings
slowly told,

The thermometer is checking off his fate.

Will there be frost to-night?

THE FROST

The silver streak drops slowly, and again he sits to
wait

The blasting of a year of hope and toil,
The blighting of the harvest upon which is staked his
fate,

A home of wanton elements the spoil.
Will there be frost to-night?

Again he holds the light up to the swelling silver ball.
And the point has fallen close to thirty-three;
A quickly stifled curse becomes a prayerful, earnest
call,

And he strives to wait his judgment patiently.
Will there be frost to-night?

It's the Christmas of the children, it's the right man
has of life,

It's the mortgage 'gainst the home, and land, and
stock,

It's the lessening the burdens of a pioneering wife,
At which the warring hosts of Nature mock.

Will there be frost to-night?

Oh, the anguish of being impotent, the powerlessness
to fight,

To pit brawn, brain and sinew 'gainst the foe!
In agony to wait upon the devastating blight
That shatters with a solitary blow.

Will there be frost to-night?

THE FROST

Each glowing dream is ended, rosy dreams of pioneers,
(Such times can rob a dreamer of his spell);

Then wearied, harassed body over tortured mind
careers,

And restless sleep falls on him like a knell.

Will there be frost to-night?

He wakens, shivers, golden streaks illumine the distant
hills,

His eye takes in the growing fields, and sod

All shaggy brown, no glittering white—his weary
spirit thrills,

For the threatening night has safely passed, thank
God!

There'll be no frost to-night!

THE EMIGRANT

Two voices calling me, one from o'er the sea,
A patient yet insistent tone I hear incessantly,
Love eternal waiting there, beckoning to me.

The other voice is loud and clear, it blows o'er plain
and hill,

And there is Promise in its call, it holds me with a
thrill—

The West that's calling, calling to its bosom grand and
still.

EAU DE COLOGNE

I've just got my mail from the village,
A letter and photo from Nell,
Tied up with a white satin ribbon,
And a most odoriferous smell;
I'm slacking, I know, and I guess you presume
That her letter exuded a fragrant perfume.

We loosen up some on the prairie
On those phases of gentler life,
And civilized notions and grammar
Are not for the West's daily strife.
When Homeland's away off and all those who care,
What matters the paint if a fellow stays square?

I was what the cold world calls a failure,
At home I held five jobs a year,
Till at last in despair they loosed me out West;
I've prospered and taken root here.
I wouldn't trade this for the life that I knew,
But there's some things that sting in a backward
review.

We dursn't think of it too often,
The Homeland and all that we left,
And constant hard work's the best killing
Of the thought of the things we're bereft;
But say, that one lone waft of eau de Cologne
Just turned me heartsick for the home and my own.

EAU DE COLOGNE

It took me right back to the op'ra—
Me decked out in shirt stiff and white,
And Nell sitting by me all frilly,
Her pretty brown eyes shining bright,
And an atmosphere charged with the subtle perfume,
That arose from the folds of her lovely costume.

And then at the boat she was crying,
And as we stood at the gang plank,
I took from her hands, as I kissed her,
Her kerchief, sweet-smelling, and dank.
O Lord! but I felt in a terrible funk—
I've got it now somewhere packed deep in my trunk.

For a year I've been trying to tell her
That the things that we hoped cannot be,
That the West was not made for such women
Of afternoon frocks and pink tea.
I've tried many times, but each time that I write
I sniff at her letter and give up the fight.

But the thing must be done somehow, sometime—
She's not made for a Westerner's mate;
Does Destiny play thus with all men?
O God! how I curse at my Fate!
I'll write it out now and be done with the battle,
Then go out and feed up the horses and cattle.

THE WIND

I'm all alone in the forest wild,
Remote of mankind red and white,
Yet a constant friend to this nature-child
Never fails in the dim twilight;

Who wafts me his medley music
Through that surging emerald sea,
With wizardry, luring, fantastic—
That's what the wind means to me.

In moods the most varied and rarest,
From the nethermost territories hurled,
He has taught me through tunes in his tempest
To feel the heart-throbs of a world.

He takes me to far distant cities,
He brings here the earth's smiles and groans,
He urges me on, soothes, and pities,
I have learnt all the whims of his tones.

Sometimes he sounds like men's footfalls
Creeping stealthily up to my door;
Then trembling seizes my shack walls
At a vast human, comforting roar.

A sweet little bird-like twitter,
The lilt of a children's song,
And life seems to be the less bitter,
Long hours slide more cheerly along.

THE WIND

Again like the wail of an infant,
Or a mother's soft lullaby,
The sweet tones of lover aspirant,
Or a blasted soul's last shriekèd cry.

Now stern bitter anger he's nursing,
And I shudder within at the sound;
He's chiding, reproving and cursing,
I glance fearfully all around.

But I'm still alone in my cabin,
'Neath the wind-tossed, groaning trees,
Save for the echoing within
Of the many-mooded breeze.

BALM OF NIGHT

When you're full of black despair,
And you've ceased to think or care
 If you'll ever struggle this dark earth-life through;
When you've sat and direly cursed,
As you've seen the fields you've nursed,
 Threshed out by hail, as tall and green it grew;
When you've found a steer just dead,
Or you've started seeing red
 At a coming two-year-old nigh carved in two;
When throughout a twice-long day,
Not a thing has gone your way,
 But Fate has played the giddy jade with you;

When the frost has killed your crop,
Fresh misfortunes pile atop,
 Till you can't tell but it means a sponged-out slate;
When there's shivers in your back
For a future that's all black,
 And you're all alone to fight it out and wait;
When you're sorry that you came,
For there's nought on earth to blame,
 You've toiled each day from sunrise until late;
When you feel it's time to quit,
For you've lost your store of grit,
 And you know you're not on cordial terms with
 Fate;

THE BALM OF NIGHT

Take your woes out to the night,
Make an ending to the fight,
In the soothing murmur of the poplars' sway;
Walk within the ghostly hush,
Broken only by the rush
Of the night-hawk's whirring, winged, roundelay.
'Neath the moon and pin-pricked stars,
Or the North Lights' rainbow bars,
In a solitude that bares your human clay,
In a quiet that awes the soul,
Gives you sight of further goal,
Feel the blight on heart and body fade away.

Every sorrow has its balm,
Feed your soul on evening's calm,
For the daily trials of the homestead fight;
There's a solace in the air,
Nature's salve is everywhere,
Sifting through the pale, pellucid, saffron light.
Troubles quickly from you glide,
Again the Road of Life is wide,
And Future earnest strivings will requite;
So when troubles on you creep,
Gluttoning your toil-earned sleep,
Go step your soul in Balm of Western Night.

THE EMIGRANT'S CHRISTMAS

Alone in my log shack beneath the foothills,
I sit and dream of Christmas Days gone by,
Those happy, joyous times back in the Homeland,
Before this struggle under Western sky.

A coyote's howl is all that breaks the stillness,
A quietness that seems to pierce me through;
Alone, alone upon the snowy vastness
Encircled by the North Lights' golden-blue.

I close my eyes, and visions pass before me—
I see the ghosts of Yuletides gay, long past,
When I knew not grim solitude's fierce aching,
Before I took a homestead on this vast.

The theatres are belching forth their thousands,
The stately churches shedding mellowed light,
Bells pealing forth their chimes upon the glad throngs
That pass beneath them in the starry night.

Oh for an hour amid the joyous revel,
To make another in the teeming mass,
To lose myself within the festive tumult,
And in the stream of humantide to pass!

NEW YEAR'S EVE

To-night is New Year's Eve, and God! I'm lonely,
It's the saddest, hardest night of all the year,
Yet it wouldn't be so desolate, if only
There were one spark of love, one soul to cheer.

Thirty below, and the willows white and ghastly,
A glowing saffron halo rings the moon;
In the cloudless dome of heaven rounding vastly,
The stars shine cold upon the misty dune.

There's something 'bout this night that makes my
heart ache,
—A roving ship of ever changing ports—
For those shadowed barks at wharves which each
some part take
In the Land to which to-night my soul resorts.

Loves I have ever known, longer than living,
Loves that I knew but for a month, a year,
Big, generous souls, the cheerful halloo giving,
This night I want to feel, to know them near.

This teeming heart with gratitude's o'erflowing,
Yet selfish in the thought of love soon lost,
But richer, ever richer in the knowing,
Soul stirrings on the toiling barks that crossed.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Longing's so great I almost wish I'd never
Seen to the hearts of those who smoothed the path,
That aching pain might not be mine for ever
At times like this, gleaning the aftermath.

I watch the clockhands flit around to midnight
—It's more than likely they're an hour wrong—
Each solemn beat ticks quickly off a dead mite
Of a year that once seemed lingering and long.

* * * * *

The snow whirls round the shack in frenzied madness,
Dull sunbeams struggle through the misty haze,
The awful night is ended, and its sadness,
—To-day is very much like other days.

L'ENVOI

I've lived with you, I've toiled with you,
Spent lonely homestead years with you,
I've shared your tortures, joys a few,
I know the great big heart of you.

I know the hardships of your life,
That stalwart souls alone can bear;
My lot has been your hopes and fears,
Your all emotions through the year.

My tribute this to those I love,
Phlegmatic friends of ingrate earth,
Who pit against soil's freakish moods
Resolve to give a nation birth.

My love to you, respect to you,
Boundless admiration too;
Seed of this Last Great West, adieu,
I've sought to tell the world of you.

A BIVOUAC BEHIND THE LINES

When day's racking toil is done,
Or weary march 'neath torrid sun,
The great orb sets in bloody red,
And every creature seeks its bed,
I wander to a belt of trees
That skirts a stream stirred by the breeze;
I throw my bundle from my back,
And there I build my bivouac.

Two rubber sheets, a piece of tin,
A strip of salted carpalin,
A wire stretched from tree to tree,
And I'm contented as can be.
With pipe I sit against the flap,
Sunset and moonrise overlap,
The woods against the sky grow black
And shadow my lone bivouac.

Waves on the wheatfield lull to rest,
The barley droops each rustling crest;
Above me in the dimming light
Return our planes in wild-goose flight.
The last low breath of movement dies,
Stars penetrate the mottled skies,
And moonbeams from infinite space
Make of my leaves a magic lace;
I rest my head upon my pack
And dreamings fill my bivouac.

A BIVOUAC BEHIND THE LINES

Aeons back my memory strays,
Through vagaries of a wanderer's ways,
To carefree days, calm evening joys,
Time little valued, girls and boys,
Friendships whose worth I knew not then,
Comrades now lost to angels' ken,
My lonely little western shack.
To-morrow, what? my bivouac.

A roystering songster chirps good night,
Sauntering home in laggard flight,
And all of earth and sky at rest,
I lay me down on nature's breast;
And sleep all night in perfect trust
Till early sunbeams gaily thrust
Their blazing fingers through each crack
And rouse me from my bivouac.

DIVISIONAL REST

Out of the trenches shell-battered
Wearied we came,
Dirty, dejected, mud-spattered;
The lurid flame
Of streaming flarelights in their glow
Lit paths to stumbling feet below.

Through duckboarded gullies amazing,
With quickening breath,
In mingled shell shriekings bedazing,
Past spattering death
From the grimed, sweating forms at our guns,
And down past where the narrow railway runs.

Over the bosom of nature,
Crater-pocked, spoiled,
Spune of a devil's pleasure,
God's imprint moiled,
Through villages levelled in Hunnish bond,
Marching in hope to the stillness beyond.

In the blue-grey mist of dawning
Our feet still rang
Through lanes white may adorning,
Where yet birds sang.
A land that seemed unearthly blessed,
And here for the war-wearied--Rest.

DIVISIONAL REST

Never before were fields so green,
Such diamond dew,
Never such leafy woodlands seen,
Bluebells so blue;
Never the sound of a gun was there,
Never had earth been to me so fair.

In the quiet of eve from village spire
Sweet church bells rang,
The cuckoo called in the wondrous fire,
A linnet sang,
And banished the fear of the Valley of Death—
'Twas joy just to breathe in each sweet tranquil breath.

ARRAS, SPRING 1918

Our feet re-echo hollow in the ways,
Heaped with the wreckage of a ravished town;
The countless happy homes of other days
Stand tenantless, shell-battered, tottering down;
The noon rays of the lazy April glow
Send streaming light through torn cathedral spire,
And set ablaze a multi-colored fire
From stained glass fragments on the ground below.

Within the shadows of a ruined hall
There blooms an old French garden, lonely, fair;
The peach trees clamber o'er the shattered wall,
And cherry blossoms drop their petals there.
From out the verdure rank which skirts the lawn
Great clust'ring daffodils raise brazen heads,
And perfumes faint arise from hidden beds
Where flowers modest and unknown are born.

