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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK RHYMES OF A ROUGHNECK ***

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RHYMES OF A ROUGHNECK

BY PAT O'COTTER
1918

DEDICATED

TO

ALASKA

The home of the tin can and dog,
A waste of snow, ice, and moss.
The graveyard of ambitions,
The by-word for hell,
The home of the famed double cross.
Men come here for gold,
Ambitious for wealth
They stick—for they can't get away,
They dig, drink, and die,
And then go to hell,
To pay for their last sucker play—

ALASKA

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THE BIRTH OF THE LAND

For a thousand years the Devil crouched
On the white hot flags of hell:
For a thousand years the Devil cursed
The imps that had chained him well;
For a thousand years the Devil sulked
And planned with his hell-trained brain
Of the things he'd do, when his term was thru,
And freed from the blistering chain.

He'd even the score with the men of earth,
And give them back pain for pain,
For all of the days he had felt the blaze
And the sear of the galling chain.
And it came to pass when his time was up
And hell's gates were opened wide
That all hell rang, and the clinkered imps sang
When the Devil passed Outside.

"I have served my time," the Devil said
As he halted by heaven's gate;
I have sweated in hell for a thousand years
And each year was a year of hate.
I have framed my plans for a thousand years,
I have worked out the details well
Now I'd have a place near the human race
As a sort of a prep school for hell.

The sons of men, on the earth below
Have scarcely a chance to sin,
Churched, belled and gowned, they mope around
By precept, all sealed in;
There is never a sin for lust of flesh
Nor sin for a man struck blow,
And the red blood crime of the olden time
Has passed with the long ago.

Hell's motley crew is scarce worth coal
When they come to the thing called death;
They squat on the coals with the real damned souls

And listen with bated breath,
To the tales of the earth, when the world was new,
When a man had to fight for his own,
When he took his wife at the risk of his life
And killed for a half-baked bone.

Now I'd build a place where a man might sin
For the sake of his own desires;
Make his the cause, and his the laws,
And the penalty, mine own fires;
Hast a place on earth to breed such men
Each for his own deeds blamed?
If you'll give me a place, I'll breed a race
That hell may not be shamed.

The God King sighed as he searched the plat
And the map of the earth below;
I have given a place for every race
In the belt from snow to snow.
I have given a home to each bird and beast
For even the fox has its hole,
I have given all land to the sons of man
And I've builded a home for his soul.

In the seven days that I toiled below
When I builded the seas and lands,
There was much to do, and I didn't get thru
And one place unfinished stands.
It's the part of my work that I really regret,
For I know it's the worst of the lot,
It's known down below as The Land of the Snow,
Or, The Country that God forgot.

It stands apart by the Northern Pole,
Unfinished, forgotten, alone,
And no man's hand has won this land,
And no man calls it his own.
The country is made up of odds and ends,
Unfinished mountain, and swamp and lake,
Stuff that couldn't be used when the earth was fused;
If you want it, it's yours to take.

"I'll take this plot," the Devil quoth,
"For I like your description well,
Yes, I'll take this place and I'll mould a race
That will be a credit to hell."
Then he whistled an imp from the uttermost part
And they dropped as the comets whirled
Past the white baked stars, past Venus and Mars
To the unfinished part of the world.

He landed at last on Denali's crest
And he gazed on his acres wide—
Barren and bleak, from each mountain peak
And swamp to the Arctic's tide.
The Devil grinned as he stood and gazed
Said he, "This is just what I need,
It's the place of my plan, for the downfall of man
Where I'll change his ambition to greed."

Then he summoned the legions of hell to his side
Named an arch imp to straw boss each crew.
Tho they gibbered and cursed, each one did the worst
With the jobs Satan gave them to do.
They tumbled the mountains high up, and on end,
Piled glaciers where streams ought to be,
And swamp land was placed in the desolate waste
That stretched from the hills to the sea.

They shook down all hell for a climate to fit,
But they couldn't get suited in hell,
So they took the worst parts and with devilish arts
They built one that suited them well.
They laid out muck swamps where the water lies dead
Bred mosquitoes and moose flies and gnats
Put the brown bear that kills on the barren brown hills

And with quill pigs infested the flats.

They shut off the sun for full half of the year,
Made each glacier a blizzard blown trap,
They strung out volcanoes half way to Japan
Each one with a hair trigger cap.
They planned for the coast line a system of storms
Each equipped with a ninety mile breath
And then spread o'er it all the fog that men call
The North Coast mantle of death.

Then knowing full well that man would not go
To a Land so forlorn to behold,
He salted the hillsides and some of the streams
With nuggets and traces of gold.
He tinted the hills with a green copper ledge
And covered the valleys with game,
All this for a lure, then the Devil felt sure
That the white man would fall for the same.

THE LAND

The lure of the little known places
Still calls, as it called to your sires;
The longing for wide open spaces,
The perfume of evening camp fires;
The hunting for treasure unfound yet
The knocking at fortune's own gate;
The doing of deeds for the joy that it breeds
Were all used by the Devil as bait.

The summers besprinkled with sunshine,
The hillsides a riot of bloom
With meadows a color shot grandeur
And valleys as still as a tomb.
With mountains of cloud-encased beauty
Or with stars shining down on it all
It's the trails we don't know that call us to go
And no wonder man heeded the call.

The winters, the trails all unbroken,
The far fields that beckon and call;
The song of the frost on the runners
And the Northern Lights high over all;
The trees in the bend of the river,
The streams that nobody has spanned;
The whisper of gold, the story half told,
All this by the Devil was planned.

When the trap of the Devil was ready
Widespread went the whisper of gold,
And the white men stampeded like cattle,
There never was tie that could hold.
The first mad rush to the Northland
When the scum from the four ends of earth
Came in with a rush, a scramble, a crush
Like scrap in a fusing pot hurled.

They came all untaught and not ready,
Spurred on in the mad rush for gold;
They died here unsung and uncared for
Of famine, and scurvy and cold.
They had the same laws as the wolf pack,
Stay up, for you die if you fail,
And the paths to the Northern placers
Are marked by their graves on the trail.

The towns that they started were plague spots
With brothels and dance halls aglare,
With cribs, faro banks and roulette wheels
And phonographs adding their blare.
All traps for the young and unwary,
All builded to help with his fall,
Never dealer was fair, never game on the square
For the Devil presided o'er all.

Nick fiendishly grinned when he saw his work
And he chuckled with devilish glee—
"When it comes to making an up-to-date hell
They've sure got to hand it to me.
For every ten souls that come in to this land
There's nine of them headed for hell
With never a fight, the percentage is right,
And my prep school is doing quite well."

Thus for a time he ruled this land
Where few might venture forth,
For never a man-made law held good
From Dixon's Entrance north.
He held this land in his claw tipped grip,
And he took his pay in souls,
Theirs was the blame, for they played his game,
And they paid for it on hell's coals.

But the Devil lost when the law came in,
Or the men who made the laws,
The gambling hall and the dance hall went
And the Devil was forced to pause.
For the life in the land develops men,
Men of an alien breed,
A new made lot, that couldn't be bought,
And strangers to graft or greed.

They loosed the land from the Devil's grip,
They pierced the hills with their trails,
They flagged the rocks at the harbor's mouth,
They paved the way for the rails.
They builded a school where the dance hall stood
And they brought in their children and wives;
They gave their all to the new land's call
And some of them gave their lives.

Now the pimp and the brothel have passed away
And the gambling hall is a dream;
A railroad train now follows the trail
Where we followed a nine-dog team.
A thousand stamps now sing their song
Where we panned on the gold shot ledge,
And a picture show now marks the line
That once was the frontier's edge.

The milch cows graze where the brown bear roamed
And a saw mill sings its lay
On a bar in the Yukon River
Where we panned one summer day.
They are raising wheat where the bull moose grazed
In the summers of long ago,
It seems kind of strange when we note the change,
But we'd rather have it so.

Yet, sometimes we dream as we camp at night
In the bend of the river's flow
Of the land that was, of the land we knew
In the days of the long ago.
The wild free land that bred the men
Who fought with might and main
And took this land from the Devil's hand,
And we'd like to see it again,

A WOMAN, A DOG, AND A WALNUT TREE

This Land is the orphan kiddie
Of the group with their stars in the Flag,
And it's looked on Outside as an alien,
Where its treatment makes honest men gag.
It's treated the same as the harlot
Who barter her body for pelf
And carries it home to her master

And is told to look after herself.

Of course we're an orphan, adopted
When cast off by the great Russian Bear
And our lot's been the lot of an orphan
And we've had a "stage orphan's" care.
Our coal land was grabbed by our Uncle,
Our copper and fur by the Jews,
While another gang took all our salmon
And corrupted our natives with booze.

Sam gave us an Army Commission
And told it to build us a Trail,
But all that Sam gave was permission—
He didn't come thru with the kale.
Now a trail in Alaska costs money
And when Dick tries to get a bill thru
Some jackass from Maine reads the figures
And "moves the amount cut in two."

Our Uncle Sam owns all the cables,
And the prices he gets are a sin,
It costs more for a word to Seattle
Than it does from Salt Lake to Berlin.
Our coast line is rugged and broken,
A menace to each ship that sails,
But Sam has no money for coast lights,
They get the same treatment as trails.

And Alaska is some husky orphan,
We can reach from the Gulf to B.C.,
We could stand with one foot in Kansas
While the other was washed by the sea.
We're allowed only one voice in Congress,
And that one bereft of a vote,
And has to get some one's permission
Ere he loose a protest from his throat.

Sam gave us a group legislative,
But barred them the making of laws,
They could only memorialize Congress
And give it the reasons and cause.
The cry of the world is for Home Rule
Yet imported fools crowd our bench,
And some of their mining decisions
Send up to high Heaven their stench.

Sam made us quit gambling, that's all right,
But one thing that nobody knows
Is why he allowed a bone head from Georgia
Hang the crêpe on our own picture shows.
We're all hedged about with restrictions
And, Sam, won't you in us confide
Why some of your dampfool ideas
Are not tried out on some one outside?

This Land's not the land of the weakling
And the men up here know what we need,
And we're sick of your bunch from the Outside
Who's only incentive is greed.
We've stood for Pinchot's conservation
And we've stood for your carpet-bag horde
Who have grabbed off the jobs in Alaska
As a sort of political reward.

But, Sam, take a tip from a Roughneck,
Go slow now and don't crowd your hand
Or some day you may find that the orphan
Has quit creeping and learned how to stand.
Don't make us the goat for the theories
Advanced by some government cog,
And don't use this land as a station
For trying things out on the dog.

We gaze o'er the line of the Yukon
As we're watching our neighbors at play

And we wonder why Our Uncle Sammy
Don't treat his Alaskans that way.
We look at their broad graded highways
And then at our own half blazed trails
And, Sam, it comes damned nigh to envy
When we think of their thrice a week mails.

They don't know the word conservation,
Their resources, all theirs to use,
And when they ask their Uncle to help them
Their Uncle don't often refuse.
Their Uncle has helped them develop,
Furnished work there for men who were broke,
And, Sam, when it comes to Coast Lights
They make ours look like a joke.

But in spite of it all, Sam, we love you,
We love every thread in the Flag,
We love every stream in Alaska,
We love every cliff, every crag.
We're not like the Woman or Dog, Sam,
And we're not like the Walnut Tree
Cause we want to be loved in return, Sam,
And, Sam, you are blind, or you'd see.

Old English Proverb:

"A Woman, a Dog, and a Walnut Tree
The more you beat them the better they'll be."

WHEN THE WATER STARTS TO RUN

Along in early spring time, as the sun starts swinging North
To linger with the land it loves, and violets peep forth,
When the water starts to running thru the riffle blocks at noon
And you figure that you'll clean up, about the first of June.
You've been thru a long hard winter, but you see the end in sight,
You don't worry 'bout the cleanup, cause you know the pay is right;
But you're feeling sort of restless, as your blood warms with the sun
And your heart will start to itching, when the water starts to run.

You may leave your Camp at evening and mush away to Town
To dally with the hootch a bit, but the feeling will not down.
You may mix up in a poker game, or try the dance hall's lure
But you're fighting off a feeling, that the old cures cannot cure.
You've got that longing feeling that there's nothing satisfies,
And your pard can't interest you, no matter how he tries,
You're lonesome, moody, restless, out at Camp, or in the Town
Your mind will not rest easy, and your troubles will not drown.

Then memory pulls her picket pins, your thoughts go back thru years
To Outside, Home, and Sweetheart, and this last thought sort of cheers;
You recollect the days you spent beneath a Southern sky
And with regret you now remember they all ended with good-by.
It's the same old world-wide feeling that comes to man each year,
But it seems to hit us harder, when we're getting in the "clear";
It seems that it grows stronger, each year added to our life—
It's the hankering of the white man for a Pal, a Home, a Wife.

Man was not meant to live alone, why quarrel with Nature's laws,
God gave you strength to build a home, wherefor then do you pause?
Go forward like your father did, go forth and seek your mate,
For till you know a wife and home, you know not Heaven's Gate.
It's the deep inherent longing for a baby on your knee,
For the sound of children's voices, beneath your own fig tree.
The male instinct to have a mate, to love, to guard, to hold,
The one instinct that's left to us, that triumphs over gold.

With strength enough to build a home when once you get a wife
Bear gently with her follies, but guard her with your life;
Crowd full her heart with loving, yet hold a guarded rein,
Lest ye two now that rate as one, again be counted twain.
And if she come from Outside Camp, remember all is new

And give her time to find herself, teach her to lean on you.
And should homesickness grip her, and you find your wife in tears
Forget the jest and love her, remember your first years.

Then gone that restless feeling, gone all desire to roam,
Life's interest all is centered, deep in your Northern home.
Life waits in peace the cleanup, you pass up Outside joys,
And the tempter's voice is silenced by the music of her voice.
Then you're a true Alaskan, with a home won from the North,
God grant you children's voices when the violets peep forth,
And in the summer evening, beneath the midnight sun,
May your heart grow closer to her, when the water starts to run.

THE THROWBACK

He was born far east of the Rockies
Of a pet in society's van;
A wine-soaked daughter of pleasure
Bred back and threw a man;
A man-child who grew up a stranger,
Who never could learn the way
Of a people who gauge their pleasure
On a line with the price they pay.

Just a shred of an education—
A few years of college life,
A course in the card and wine room,
A year with a chorus-girl wife,
Then disgust with a life unnatural
Spurred on with the curse of the go,
He quitted that life forever
For the land of the gold and snow.

The Lure of the Land had gripped him,
The Land where you die if you fail;
The Land of the fabled fortunes,
The Land of the endless trail.
The Land of the lonely silence,
The Land of the cruel cold,
The Land of the lost ambitions
Alaska, the Land of gold.

There winters of long hungry hardships,
Summers of pest-ridden heat;
Dicing with death for a grub stake,
Risking his life for meat.
Tossing away his young manhood,
Giving the best of his youth
To the holes that he bedrocked on wildcats,
Where gold was scarcer than truth.

Ten years spent in Alaska
Gray haired, with cheeks all atan,
Beaten, but still unconquered.
Flat broke, but still a man,
Digging and sinking and drifting,
Trying to locate the "pay,"
With each hole a fresh disappointment—
Yet hoping to strike it next day.

Scorning the letters recalling,
Forgetting the friends he had known,
Turning his back on the Outside,
Facing the future alone.
A Cabin, a Squaw, and a Fishwheel,
A bend in the river's flow,
A band of half-naked breed kids—
He stayed there, a sourdough.

THE MALAMUTE

When the stars from the skies have fallen
And the smoke of the world's cleared away;
When Saint Peter marks "30" in Life's Book
And we meet there on Judgment Day;
When our trials and troubles are ended
And we're wise to the best and the worst;
When the time has arrived that the wise ones
Have told us the last shall be first;

When the men who've made good are rewarded
And the losers are turned loose in Hell;
That's the time that a lot will be learning
The true reason and cause that they fell.
And I wonder when Peter gets busy
As he works out the tenement plan,
And when Heaven's thrown free for location
Will he confine the locations to man?

If he does, my claim's open for jumping
For I can't figure Heaven complete,
If the dim distant trails of the sky land
Are not pattered by malamutes' feet.
Cause I know it would never seem home-like
No matter how golden the strand,
If I lose out that pal-loving feeling
Of a malamute's nose in my hand.

And it's that way with lots of Alaskans
These men of our own last frontier,
Who tear into nature unaided
And who scarce know the meaning of fear.
Who live on lone creeks all alone here
Where the living and dying are hard,
And where oft times their only companion
Is a malamute pup for a pard.

He's a real chum with things coming easy,
He's a pal with things breaking tough,
He's a hell-roaring fighting companion
When somebody starts something rough.
He's a true friend in sorrow and sickness
And he doesn't mind hunger or cold,
And he's really the only one pardner
You can trust when you uncover gold.

He's a guard you can trust at the sluice box,
And he'll watch by your cache thru the night,
And if some cheechako tries to molest it
That cheechako's in for a fight.
As a pardner he's silent, but cheerful
With never a kick 'bout the trails
And if it wasn't for him in the winter
There never would be any mails.

He pulls on our sleds in the winter
He's first in the rushing stampede
He goes where a horse couldn't travel
And besides that he rustles his feed.
He takes a pack saddle in summer
And follows us off thru the hills
And when we go short on the grub pile
He shares up whatever he kills.

'Twas a malamute first scaled the Chilkoot
At the time of the great Klondike charge;
'Twas a malamute first saw Lake Bennett
And left his footprints at La Barge;
They hauled the first mail into Dawson,
That Land of the Old Timer's dream,
And when Wada first drove in from Fairbanks
He was driving a malamute team.

They broke the first trail into Bettles

With no guide save the lone Northern Star;
They freighted next year to Kantishna
And from there to the famed Chandelar.
They know the long trail to Innoko,
Tacotna and Iditarod too,
For there's never a Camp in the Northland
But what these same malamutes knew.

They brought the first sport to the Nome Beach
Where they showed up in action and deed
That the North dog is game as they make them
And besides that has plenty of speed.
He came home with the bacon from Candle
Like a bat out of Hell, thru the snow,
And the plunger that cashed in his "out tab"
Was his pardner, the Old Sourdough.

So it seems to me kind of unfair now
As we drift toward that permanent Camp
Where the angels are running a dance hall
And a millionaire grades with a tramp;
Where the trails are located on pay dirt
And a grub stake can never expire—
Well, if they shut out my dog, they can keep it
And I'll "siwash" it, down by Hell's Fire.

They herald the growth of the Northland
And progress is marked by their trail;
A railroad now goes where they brought out
The Seward-Iditarod mail.
He's first in the growth of Alaska
And without him this land would be lost,
For there's never a stream in this country
That the malamutes' trail has not crossed.

But you can't tell me God would have Heaven
So a man couldn't mix with his friends;
That we're doomed to meet disappointment
When we come to the place the trail ends.
That would be a low-grade sort of Heaven
And I'd never regret a damned sin
If I mush up to the gates, white and pearly,
And they don't let my malamute in.

UNSATISFIED

Some sigh for the breath of the desert
Where the stifling heat waves blow;
Some pant for the trackless tundra
And the sting of the cold and snow;
Some long for the wash of a sultry sea
As it breaks on a tropic shore;
Some pine for the breeze of the northern seas
And the sound of the Arctic's roar.

The things that men love be countless
But they're seldom the same with two,
For the things I care for most of all
Might never appeal to you.
Some men run to wine and woman,
Some long for a wife and a home,
And he drifts with the tide, unsatisfied,
Who leaves these things to roam.

For he hates the sands of the desert
And the slimy tropic south,
Or his dreams of a northern fortune
Are as ashes in his mouth.
He loses the best life holds for man
His existence means discontent
Still he goes his way, until comes the day
When he quits it—a life misspent.

YET

Some sigh for the breath of the desert
Where the stifling heat waves blow;
Some pant for the trackless tundra
And the sting of the cold and snow;
Some long for the wash of a sultry sea
As it breaks on a tropic shore;
Some pine for the breeze of the northern seas
And the sound of the Arctic's roar.

THE PROSPECTOR

Where the ragged, snow-capped saw tooth
Cuts the azure of the sky
And watches o'er the lonely land
As ages wander by;
Where the sentinel pines in grandeur
Murmur to the glacier stream
As it, ice-gorged, gluts the canyon,
Never brightened by the gleam
Of sun at brightest noon day,
Nor moon of Arctic night,
And whose only link with Heaven
Is the fitful Northern Light.
Where the Whistler shrills in triumph
And the Big Horn dreams in peace,
Where the Brown Bear skulks to cover
Up where silence holds the lease;
Where the land is as God left it
Nor has known the tread of man,
There's a treasure ledge a-waiting—
Go and find it if you can.

If your heart be steeled to triumph
Nor beats less at your defeat;
Can you watch your whole world melt away
And still smiling, fortune greet?
Will your heart and brain and sinew
Crowd you on, when hunger's pain
Gnaws your belly and you're beaten,
Can you lose, and fight again?
Can you raise the cup of fortune
To your lips and bravely quaff
The draught she has prepared for you
And win or lose and laugh?
Can you see the fruits of hardships
Centered on one desperate throw
And know Fate's dice are loaded
Nor curse to see them go?
Then take your burden up again
And stagger up the trail,
You're bound to make a winning
Cause you don't know how to fail.

I, who've spent my youth in following
The lure of hidden gold
Must pass the buck to Nature
And admit I'm growing old.
And yet each spring I hear it calling
And it's music to my ears,
The call of lonely places
That I've listened to for years.
It's cost me all most men hold dear
Some forty years of life,
And all the joys that others get
In babies, home, and wife.
My life's been all to-morrows
And my family only dreams
And to the average plodder
I've missed it all it seems.
Still, I've never taken orders

And I've always liked the game,
And if life could be lived over,
Why,—I'd live it just the same.

IF

(A Steal from Kipling)

If you can hit the trail in zero weather
And laugh at frozen hand, or foot or face;
If you can eat your dogs, and still keep moving
And beat the rest, and hold the stampede's pace;
If you can stake and dig alone, unaided
And hold your ground, if needs be with a gun
And find the gold and have some lawyer steal it,
And lose, and start again, and call it fun.

If you can go a year on mouldy bacon
And fight the scurvy off with bayo beans;
If you can jump your socks and do your washing
And smile the while you patch your threadbare jeans;
If you can laugh when sordid hunger mocks you
And smile while passing strangers eat your grub;
If you can boost when everybody knocks you
And know him wrong who holds you but a dub.

If you can still the pain when Outside calls you
And choke back thoughts of friends you still hold dear;
If you can still the dreams when night befalls you
And wake and strike while eyes and brain are clear;
If you can wait and stick it out a-smiling
When longing letters come to you from home,
And then don't find the taste of "hootch" beguiling
You'll like this Land, from Seward up to Nome.

If you can bear the deadly strain of waiting
Till your turn comes, and fortune smiles on you;
If you can fight and lose and keep on fighting
And to your early promises stay true;
If you can go thru Hell to spend the summer
And cuss, and freeze, and starve the winter thru
And start in broke again another New Year
You don't need this Land to make a man of you.

If you can beat the Row, the Game, the Dance-hall
And all men's pleasures, that you know are sin;
If you can live alone, and not get lonesome
Nor heed the "lady" when she says "come in":
If you can pick a winner from the "wild cats"
And hold and hope when everything looks blue;
If you can give up everything you've ever cared for
Then ALASKA IS THE ONLY PLACE FOR YOU.

US FOR SAM

While all Europe is a shambles
And the whole world is at war,
And half the land the sun shines on
Is drenched in human gore;
When every Nation counts the men
It knows are tried and true
We send this message to you, Sam,
"Alaska stands with you."
You never treated us quite right—
You grabbed away our coal,
You reserved all our fire wood
And what we've used, we've stole.
You soaked us on our cable tolls
But we don't give a damn

Even at twenty-eight cents per word
WE'RE WITH YOU, UNCLE SAM.

You've squandered untold millions
On the filthy Philippines,
But you always made Alaskans
Go and rustle for their beans.
And your black and tan possessions
Tho they've cost you quite a few
Can never be depended on,
While we'd go thru Hell for you.
We're quite unused to luxuries
And we've always played alone,
When we asked for help to build our trails
You handed us a stone.
You've four-flushed on the railroads
But we don't care a damn,
If they monkey with the Eagle
WE'RE WITH YOU, UNCLE SAM.

You gave us lief to make some laws
Then tied our hands behind;
That gift to us was just the same
As pictures to the blind.
Your laws all have a "joker,"
Made to catch some Sourdough,
And it's hard to beat the game, Sam,
The way it's framed up down below.
We've always been the dumping ground
For your political misfits,
But Sam, if you're in trouble
We're willing to call it "quits."
We've never had an even break,
But we don't care a damn;
If the Lion growls, remember this,
WE'RE WITH YOU, UNCLE SAM.

We're used to meeting troubles
And if you put us to the test
You'll find Alaska loves you, Sam,
Far better than the rest.
But Sam, when this is over,
As morning follows night,
Pray give us your attention
And set some matters right.
We need some decent cable rates,
We need some decent mails,
We need some decent coast lights
And we need some decent trails.
You've given these to all the rest
But we don't care a damn;
If it's full grown men you're needing
WE'RE WITH YOU, UNCLE SAM.

HOW LONG?

As long as lure o' placer gold
Brings North the best ye breed,
As long as tales of camps and trails
Are planted with your seed,
As long as red blood courses thru
And warms adventure's sons,
They'll sally forth, bound for the North,
Misfortune's chosen ones.

As long as snow slides claim their toll
And glaciers split and rend,
And sweepers turn the flimsy craft
And trails come to an end;
As long as flashing Northern Lights
Flame in the Arctic sky,
Your boldest ones, your bravest sons

Come North to win or die.

As long as lust of wealth obtains
And gold will buy all things,
And bank accounts but mark the line
 'Twixt shovel stiffs and kings;
As long as fancy rides free reined
And distant fields seem fair,
They'll seek the ship and make the trip
 To the land of Do and Dare.

As long as birds mate in the spring
And moose run in the fall,
And widows win the college youth
 And hold his heart in thrall;
As long as chance for fortune's smile
 Can be centered in one throw,
This is the truth, the Nation's youth
 Will hear the call and go.

As long as water runs down hill
And smoke goes up from fire;
As long as pleasure precedes pain
 And women love for hire;
As long as Klondike widows
 Trail thru Outside Cafés
Some one must stick on the lonesome creek
 For there's ever the "him" that pays.

As long as "huskies" curse the moon
And creeks remain unnamed;
As long as quicksands mask the bar
 And there's placer ground unclaimed;
As long as "pay" is found and staked
 By some deep-sea-going Swede,
That gypsy trace that marks our race
 Will out, then we stampede.

THAT 30 U.S. ON THE WALL

A man that's spent years knocking round "out in front"
Has most usually had lots of pals—
He's mixed up with pardners at various times
 And he's had his affairs with the gals.
Now, a pardner's peculiar in lots of his ways
 And he'll ditch you for various reasons,
And a gal never knows straight up from twice
 And her mind seems to change with the seasons.

I've been in on good ground with pardners I've staked
And I thought they were square, till I found
They were trying to cross me, the miserable pups,
 And whipsaw me out of my ground.
I've had a few pards that would stand the hard grind
 And they'd stick through hard luck night and day;
They were all you could ask while you rustled for grub,
 But they blew up when you uncovered the "pay."

Way back in the "eighties" when I'm just a kid,
I crossed up with a breed gal I'd met
One winter at Circle; she cleaned me that year
 And skipped out with all she could get.
I've fallen for females in half of the camps
 That's spread over this country up here,
But "square guys" or "pretzels" I couldn't get by
 And none of them stuck for a year.

I got kind of discouraged and quit the she sex
And figgered I'd just herd with males,
But it don't make no difference, I guess that I'm wrong,
 'Cause there's always the parting of trails.
I've had lots of dogs, but a dog always dies,

Or else the poor devil gets killed.
When you like 'em and lose 'em, their loss leaves a hole
That seems for a time can't be filled.

So pardners and females and dogs is taboo
And I know, 'cause I've fussed with 'em all.
There's only one pal that I know is true blue
And it's that Thirty U.S. on the wall.
She's stood by my shoulder and stopped a brown bear
And she keeps the cache full in the Fall;
She's got the one talk that a claim jumper knows
And she craves no attention at all.

I'm getting old now, and some sot in my ways,
And I don't loosen up like I did.
I'm slower to make friends and slower to trust
Than I used to be when I'm a kid.
So it's good-by to females and good-by to dogs,
And good-by to pardners and all,
For the only one pal that I find I can trust
Is that Thirty U.S. on the wall.

FLOTSAM

The China Coast's a dumping ground
And the South Sea gets its share
Of the kind of men that don't make good
The kind of man that never could
The men that never care.

A worthless, careless drinking lot
Combed out from between the Poles.
It's gin, and cards, a woman's breath,
Laughter and love and sudden death
And the Devil gets their souls.

It's a throwback to a weaker strain
That's washed by the Tropic tide.
And a mixture of Dago and Japanese
Latin and Jew and Portugese
Crops out thru a sun-tanned hide.

But the Northland gets a sterner breed
To fuse in its harder mould.
It's the breed of men that don't know fail;
That's the breed of men that hit the trail
For the fabled land of gold.

They're a sturdy, fearless, fighting lot
And they play the game to win.
They fall for women, wine, the game
And win or lose, they smile the same
And to quit is their only sin.

Here the Norsman bunks with the canny Scot
And the lad from the Emerald Isle
Works side by side with Russ and Dane,
North-bred men of brawn and brain,
Men that are worth your while.

So me for the land of the Midnight Sun
With the north lights in the sky,
Me for the land that mothers this race
Where you have to fight to hold your place,
Where you can't quit till you die.

TRYING

The dream of the white man ever goes out

To the fight that can never be won,
And ever he plans to do the things
That they say can never be done.
It's seldom he values the things that are
What he craves he may never gain,
Yet ever he tries, till the day he dies
And then feels he has lived in vain.

He climbs to the top of the highest hills
To search out the vales afar;
He bedrocks a hole on the deepest creeks
He hitches his cart to a star.
He's ever the first in the far stampede
As he chases the rainbow's blend,
But it's not the need, and it's not the greed,
It's the wanting to win in the end.

And whether he strives in the lofty range
Or tries in the crowded mart,
The longing to do what has never been done
Is uppermost in his heart.
He tries to build where none other has built,
Win the maid that none other has won,
To find the gold that he never can hold,
To finish what cannot be done.

He lives his life in a trying way
And he scorns the things that are tame,
If all seems lost, he still fights on,
For ever he plays the game.
And the efforts he makes as he strives to win
Are a credit to him and his breed,
And the gods will count and give full amount
And accept the act for the deed.

FOR

The dream of the white man ever goes out
To the fight that can never be won,
And ever he plans to do the things
That they say can never be done.

It's seldom he values the things that are,
What he craves he never may gain,
But ever he tries, till the day he dies
And then feels he has lived in vain.

THE NEW MASTER

As one who lays aside a task, where one has ruled alone,
I lay aside the crown of hell, and give to you my throne;
As one who feels his race is run, whose day is of the past,
I recognize your genius, and abdicate at last.
I go and leave you master, and I feel it's just as well,
For Hades lacks its master, until you rule in hell.
The world wags on and changes, old methods now seem weak,
And the changes of a thousand years, of these I fain would speak.

I've raised and sponsored many names, that darken history's page,
I've made them rulers of the world in many a by-gone age.
They all have shown a human turn, from Nero down to you,
But now my life-long dream of a super fiend at last seems coming true.
I've watched you since the faintest spark blazed in your mother's womb,
I've watched your hypocritic grief, beside your father's tomb;
I know the tainted blood that flows thru your each and every vein
That shows up in your withered arm, and feeds your fevered brain.

I saw it in your grandsire, where first it cropped out plain
When German gold was squandered to slay the honest Dane.
I fed you dreams of empire, and dreams of lust and greed
And the age old lust of conquest that taints all of your breed.
The strain that showed in Nero, cropped out alike in you,
You killed your gentle mother, but not as Nero slew.

I gave you hate of Albion, for all the world will tell
That could I kill that Anglo strain, I'd use the earth for hell.

I loathe the Anglo-Saxon race, I hate their English speech,
For where the Union Jack waves high, the Cross will ever reach.
Their ignorant millions till the soil, for they protect their own,
I hate it for I've never had this ensign for mine own.
I taught you how to use God's church, I built the path you trod,
I filled your mouth until you claimed, a partnership with God.
I told you tales to tell to men, I coached you every hour
Until an egomaniac ran wild, mad with a lust for power.

I made an army for you then, the peer of all war lords,
I smiled the night you went away to visit Norway fiords.
I knew your Bagdad railway schemes, I knew the Austrian claims,
I knew that German gold would guide the mad assassin's aims.
I knew the schemes that you had planned, the one that nothing curbs,
I envied your diplomacy that blamed it on the Serbs.
My brain ne'er hatched a finer scheme, your armies marking time
And then the rape of Belgium, your premier man-sized crime.

And if one deals in hellish schemes, that one must stamp your worth,
You made a shambles of that land, you moved hell up on earth.
The cries of mangled maidens, the mutilated child,
The tears of butchered mothers, would drive an earth man wild,
And thru it all proclaiming, you were the tool of God—
O pardner in this orgy, no one suspected fraud.
You butchered, maimed and pillaged, hell never saw such sights
As the Prussian Guard remembers, on those first Belgian nights.

O shades of maddened Nero and his early Christian fires,
Could he have been in Belgium and have seen your funeral pyres!
Could he have seen your orgies he would have wept for shame
But had he your fiendish cunning, he might have done the same.
But the hated Saxon balked you and the desperate fighting Frank
Hurled back our super devils and took us on the flank.
Your inbred tainted offspring lost his chances at Verdun
Where curtained steel just saved the world from the grip of brutal Hun.

But Wilhelm, you are crafty, you are mine own I ween
Your fertile brain had brought to life the hell-born submarine,
You killed the unarmed merchantmen, you murdered in the dark,
You sent the child and mother to feed your friend the shark.
The world grew sick with wonder, no voice was raised to laud
And still you did it in your name, the name of you and God.
Where you have trod the world is dead, no sign of life or mirth,
You beat me, Bill, you beat my hell, with this of yours on earth.

You won hell's admiration and of all of mine own folk
When you paired off with the ghastly Turk, that was a master stroke.
And all the things you did before, just now seem weak and tame
Since you launched that Dardanelles campaign of pillage, lust and shame.
To fuss thus with my chosen race, my ally since time dates
Proclaimed that Kultur and the Turk are well matched running mates.
And tho I've watched hell's orgies, and stood by in fiendish glee,
I quit you, Bill, these Turkish stunts are far too much for me.

When officers from Kultur's class stand by and watch a Turk
Just disembowel a mother, why, Bill, it makes me shirk.
It makes me shudder and I've watched the master fiends of hell,
But none of them have brains like you, none do their work so well.
When Turk and German flood with oil, then set a school ablaze
And bayonet the babies, as they stumble thru the haze,
I yield the crown to you, Dear Bill, my pupil passes me
You take the rôle of Master and your pupil I will be.

I've worked for hell's best interests, my master now appears
For when your name is mentioned, the imps break into cheers.
The gavel of the poor damned souls, that long has rung their knell,
Is passed to you, I abdicate and now you rule in hell.
For years I've done the best I could, now I realize I'm thru,
And in the future I'm content to live and learn from you.
Your earthly work is finished, soon in hell you'll carve your name
And I shudder when I realize that hell won't be the same.

PROSPECTING

Looking for placer pangar,
Loafing about in the hills,
Getting your grub with a rifle,
Taking your drink from rills.
Getting your bed from the spruce tree,
Taking your course by your dreams,
Just camping alone in the mountains,
Siwashing along the streams.

Locating the hind sight on Nature,
Traveling alone and far,
Thinking with no one to guide you,
Digesting the things that are.
Back trailing the life that's past you,
Peeping at what's in store,
Pondering over life's mistakes,
Wondering, how many more.

Dreaming alone of childhood days,
Regretting some things that are past,
Recalling lost opportunities,
And chances too good to last.
Living your whole life over,
Recalling the daily grind,
Thanking your God that it's over,
Glad that you've left it behind.

But still regretting your errors,
Sad for some things you have done,
Wishing that you had coppered some plays
As you count them one by one.
Now living a life, clean, decent,
For man never sins alone,
Getting a grip on your ego,
Coming at last to your own.

You dream and you hunt all summer
Till you notice a chill in the air,
Then you think of your warm snug cabin
And you feel that you'd rather be there.
Then you head over unblazed passes
Till at last you herd with your own,
And though you located no pangar
You are better for being alone.

THE WOMAN THAT YOU PASS BY

My trade was old when the world was new,
Ere the pyramids rose by the Nile
Men quitted their wives, and gave me their goods
For the warmth of my kiss, and my smile.
For never was wife who could hold her man
By the honeymoon's afterglow
Did I veil mine eyes and beckon to him,
God's truth, and 'tis you who know.

My trade was old when the world was new,
Long ere Caesar ruled in Rome,
To spend their gold in a harlot's cell
Patricians quitted home.
And high born dames since the world began
Have learned to sit and to sigh
And to patiently wait for their lords to leave
The woman that you pass by.

I'm only a pawn in the game called life,
Yet I take what you never could hold;
I garner the kisses you'd barter life for
And with them, I gather your gold.

I garner the best of your manhood's prime
Then quit them when shattered in health;
I bring to heel the ones that you love
And smiling I shear them of wealth.

To garner the wealth that you hold in store
I must keep me surpassing fair,
For the life that I lead is an open book
And the game that I deal is square.
Stop—think of the maids and wives you know
As you drift thru life's subtle game—
How many are dealing as straight as I?
How many can say the same?

You give your all, and you slave your life
In a struggle to hold one man;
You think you're paid if he call you wife
And be true to you for a span.
You keep his house and you bear his child
And you walk with your head held high
But most of his love, and his kisses go
To the woman that you pass by.

The favors you give, I sell for gold,
And men prize what costs them high;
You never will learn that love goes out
With the tear in a woman's eye;
That the patient drudge who sits at home
And learns to save and to mend
Can never hold the light of love
But is doomed to lose in the end.

So I follow the old dishonored trade,
Bedecked in garments fine,
And the cream of the earth is saved for me
In raiment and food and wine.
And life to me is a merry game
Tho, sometimes, I weep and sigh,
For deep down in your heart, do you envy me
The woman that you pass by?

WHY

Why is it Alaskans all come back
When they've quit this land for good?
Why is it that no man stays away
When he's sworn to his friends he would?
Where lies the grip this country hath
All tangled around the heart
That takes a grip that can never slip
And can never be torn apart?

Is it the lure of the summer sunshine
That goes to the head like wine?
Is it the lure of the far flung meadows
Of the shadowy scented pine?
Is it the lure of going where none have gone
Of just being alone in the wild?
Is it the lure of the ancient glaciers
That were old when Christ was a child?

They come here wild, athirst for gold
They would win and run away,
They lose the stake they brought along
And then they have to stay.
Here each one follows his own bent,
The mines, the hills, the mart,
Work's but a name, the end's the same,
The country steals your heart.

There's a lure to the land of the poppy,
There's a lure to the land of your birth,

You swear you abhor it, and yet you'll long for it
As no other land on this earth.
There's the lure of the snow mantled vastness,
There's the lure of each valley and hill,
Of friends that you've met, that you'll never forget
And you'll want to come back, and you will.

AND STILL I LIKE ALASKA

I've tramped across her endless miles of tundra,
I've rafted all her rapid flowing streams,
She's kept me on the hummer,
I've fought mosquitos in summer
And "siwashed" neath Aurora's wintry beams,
And still, I like Alaska.

I went a winter once on pay streak bacon,
I've gone a year on nothing much but beans,
I've squandered all my time checks,
The kind they give us roughnecks,
And haven't got a dollar in my jeans,
And still, I like Alaska.

I got a stake one time and wandered Outside,
And I'm telling you I surely put on "dog,"
But they got in between me and my poke
They sure did clean me
And I hit for Dixon's Entrance, on the "hog,"
And still, I like Alaska.

I don't suppose a man will live to beat it,
Some day we'll quit this land of ice and snow,
And when the Devil gits us,
And finds a place that fits us,
And we're working on the sulphur beds below,
I know I'll like Alaska.

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