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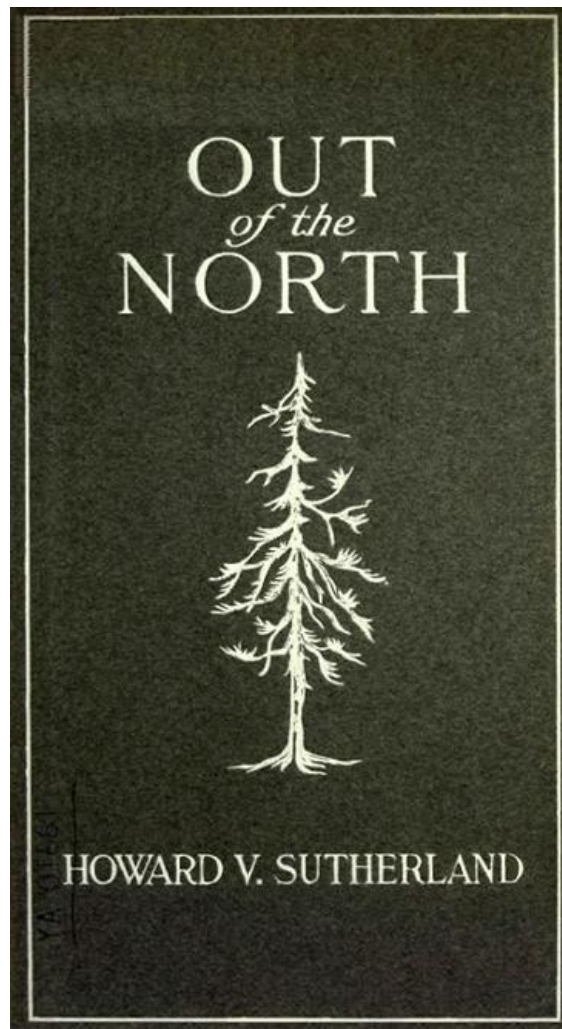
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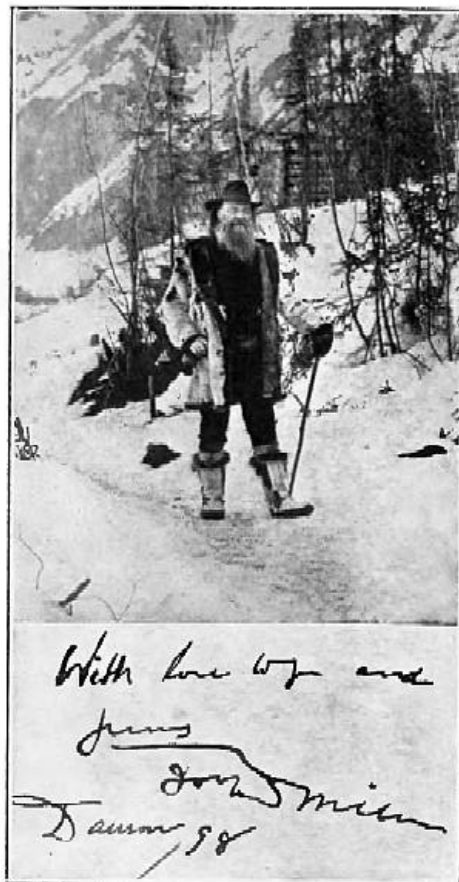
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THE WOMAN WHO COULD
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IDAS AND MARPESSA

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OUT OF THE NORTH

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JOAQUIN MILLER

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***OUT OF THE
NORTH***

By
Howard V. Sutherland

With a Foreword by
Joaquin Miller



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To FREDERICK H. RANDALL

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FOREWORD

Songs from a far-away world; a cry from another sphere. To those of us who once experienced the still and pitiless cold, a cry terribly suggestive of the horror-charged gloom, of the icy silence as unbroken as that of unfathomable deeps, of the stern and uncompromising individuality of a disturbed and vengeful North.

Yet one is also reminded that, even in the Klondyke, in due season the brooding spruces are awakened from slumber by the songs of happy-throated songsters, that the melancholy of the forest is brightened by gay flowers. The weight is then lifted from men's hearts; singing is heard in the cabin, and the sound of laughter on the trail. When the mighty Yukon is open to the Behring Sea, the far North is in touch with the world and men are glad.

But the Arctic summer is short-lived. The days of the bird and the flower and the rippling creeks are numbered. Soon the sky turns grey, the wind chants the sun's requiem, the snow falls; and then returns the cold, the gloom, the feeling of isolation, the indescribable terror.

I heard these songs sung in the Arctic, the singer at my side—these songs of nature,

songs of hope, home, heart. They seem a part of my life. I heard them as the cry of a lone bird in the vast silence of eternal snows.

JOAQUIN MILLER

THE HEIGHTS, CAL.
Nov. 15th '99

[Pg 1]

The Northern Light

Who drapes that mystic veil across that everbrooding
sky?
Who hues it with a soul of pearl? Who draws it to and
fro?
Who breathes upon it with the breath that makes it
glow and die,
Lighting that crystal river, those mountains cowl'd
with snow?

[Pg 2]

In Winter

Beneath the snow the mosses sleep
Amid the forest's silence;
Above, the stately birches keep
Unbroken vigils.

The spruce trees dream of summer hours
And birds that carrolled sweetly,
Of gentle winds and smiling flowers
That died too quickly.

[Pg 3]

Lyric

Tell me, tell me, gentle stars,
Ever watchful, ever bright,
From your stations in the sky
Do you see my love to-night?

White the snow beneath my feet,
Whiter far her holy breast;
Peaceful are the mighty woods,
But her eyes are soft with rest.

Sweet the scent of spruce and pine,
Sweeter, though, her fragrant breath;
Tell her, tell her, gentle stars,
I am hers alone till death.

[Pg 4]

Dark Days

The sun has left his throne,
The sky is leaden-hued;
The hopeless winds bemoan,
In icy aisles, their fate.

All day the shadows press
About the forest's nuns,
That dream in loneliness
Their dreams of birds and spring.

[Pg 5]

The Unanswerable

O sombre skies that ever mourn,
O silent skies so grey and stern,
Are ye the curtains of that bourne
Where we at last our fate must learn?

Is it behind your gloomy veil
The Judge with Book of Judgment stands?
Where we must pass, with faces pale,
Awaiting judgment at His hands?

O sombre skies that frown all day
Upon us hopeless, hapless men,
When Death shall beckon us away
What happens then? What happens then?

[Pg 6]

Vain Dreams

The trees, my sisters, robed in white,
Now dream of spring;
Of sun-lit day and fragrant night,
Of birds that sing.

They little think that I can tell
About their pain;
They do not know I dream as well
A dream most vain.

[Pg 7]

December

Beneath a shroud of unpolluted white,
The frozen hills lie silent and asleep;
And moveless spruce and ghostly birches keep
Their silent vigils through the endless night.
The frozen creeks, long voiceless, partly veiled
'Neath drifting snow, dream fondly of the trees;
Within the woods no bird's song and no breeze
Make wondrous music when the skies have paled.
The kingly sun ne'er sends his laughing rays
To wake the hills and warm the trees and streams;
His face is hid, and hid are now the beams
That woke the world on long-dead summer days.
The patient moon with all her silent train
Of maiden stars patrols the roads on high,
And watches well all things that sleeping lie
Till Spring's first song shall waken them again.
The white world sleeps, and all is very still,
Except when rises on the frosted air
From out its chilly and forbidding lair
A lone wolf's howl, long-drawn and terrible.

[Pg 8]

The Unassuageable

I sometimes hear among the snow-clad trees
The lone wind chanting solemn symphonies.

I sometimes smell, while yet the woods are bare,
The breath of unborn blossoms in the air.

I am at times aware of gentle sighs
There where the creek, ice-fettered, dreaming lies.

I sometimes witness when the air is still
Unearthly splendors on the white-robed hill.

I sometimes read in flashing stars at night
Mysterious promises of future light.

Father Judge, S. F.

Here was a man, a humble minister
Beloved of all in northern latitudes
Who knew the value of the kingly heart
That beat beneath his worn and priestly coat.

A soldier he, who ne'er forsook his post;
Whose actions were more numerous than words;
His soul was God's; his heart and body man's—
Nothing his own except our gratitude.

Worn e'er his time by hardship none may know
Who shirked the bitter schooling of the North,
He passed away, and now forever stands
As close to God as gentle Damien.

The Light-o'-Love

The dogs were whining; they sensed too well
The load upon the sled;
The rough-hewn box with the light-o'-love—
A girl, 'twas said.

A week ago, at the Palace Bar,
She sang the songs of France;
But many a heart is lead the while
The feet must dance.

Kisses she gave and kisses she took,
Sinned for her daily bread;
But all we knew as we eyed the box
Was: she was dead.

We placed upon it (How much it hurt
Only the good God knows!)
A gaud she had worn in her dusky hair—
A paper rose.

A crumpled thing that seemed beautiful
To lonely, broken men,
Hinting of fairer flowers and things
Beyond our ken.

We thought of her as we closed her door
As somebody's little child;
As somebody's darling, lost, long lost,
But undefiled.

The grey above us, the white beneath;
Chill silence everywhere;
Yet deep in our hearts we knew that God
Was also there.

We knew, far better than others know
Whose ways are bright and glad,
His judgments are very merciful
On good and bad.

Our little sister was now at peace.
The snow began to fall.
The flakes soon hid that gift of ours
Beneath their pall.

Under the white, white flakes the rose,
Crumpled, tawdry and red;

Hinting the pity which all men need
When they are dead.

The dogs still whined as they dragged the sled
To where the spruces dream;
And there we left her, a wayward child,
At rest in Him.

[Pg 12]

Two Quests

Every day I watch men go
Up the trail
Seeking gold. It is a show
Worth the watching; much I know
About the game.

In the dead of night they creep
Past my door;
But I hear them in my sleep,
And I pity. Very steep
The road to Fame.

[Pg 13]

The Return of the Sun

Winter is passing. The inconstant sun—
Neglectful lover, therefore doubly dear—
Kisses the stern, white faces of the hills,
Melting their hearts to tenderness again;
Kisses the earth, still shiv'ring 'neath its shroud,
And whispers it of blossoms to be born.
Kisses the boughs and lures the fresh young leaves,
Spring's verdant heralds, from their hiding place;
Kisses the trees and tells them of bright birds
Seeking new homes for merry families.

Winter is passing. The inconstant sun—
Neglectful lover, therefore doubly dear—
Enters the hearts of long despondent men,
Bidding them smile and be consoled again;
Enters their souls and whispers them of God,
Of distant homes and friends that pray for them;
Enters our cabins and dispels the gloom
Of soundless days and never-ending nights;
Enters our eyes and bids us rise and see
Winter's interment, mourn'd by laughing Spring.

[Pg 14]

Klondyke Roses

When melts at last the lingering snow
In sunny days of May or June,
Amid the velvet mosses grow
Shy roses, fragrant-smelling.
A fated sisterhood is theirs,
They sigh their souls out wistfully;
No bee makes love to them or hears
Their tender love a-telling.

They dream, perhaps, of distant lands,
(O lands, that seem as far-off spheres;)
Of love-lit eyes and tender hands
That pluck far happier roses.
But while they dream the days pass by
And August comes with ebon nights,
And sombre is September's sky—
And then their sad life closes.

A Song for the Return of Birds

Haste, little songsters, and return
 To your nests in the silent wood;
 The birches are lonely and they yearn
 For your twittering brotherhood.
 The leaves are green on the wakened trees
 And the snow has left the moss;
 The sighing breeze
 With its symphonies
 Suggests our greatest loss—
 Haste, little birds, haste home!

Haste little songsters, for the Spring
 Has come with her laughing train
 Of radiant blossoms; and now the King
 Is here, and the pattering rain.
 The nights are warm and the days are long,
 There is no more ice or frost;
 And oh! we long
 For a songbird's song,
 For a music the woods have lost—
 Haste, little birds, haste home!

[Pg 16]

The Forest Cotillion

When the wind is joyous-hearted it stirs the graceful
 spruces,
 And they nod at one another and toss their arms in
 abandon;
 Then they sway their supple bodies in wonderful
 undulations,
 Keeping a perfect time with the wind's mysterious
 music.

Then the watchmen of the forest, the solemn and silent
 birches,
 Bend stiffly their stately heads, saluting their laughing
 sisters;
 And the alders wake from slumber, and the willows
 grieve no longer
 When the wild wind woos the stream and sets the trees
 a-dancing.

[Pg 17]

The Spruces of the Forest

Unhappy trees, beneath whose graceful branches
 No lovers walk, no children ever play;
 Who never hear the sound of girlish laughter,
 But pass in gloom your silent lives away;
 I wonder if ye heed me as I press
 My heart to yours in utter loneliness.

I wonder if ye see me as I wander
 Along the trail no feet but mine e'er tread;
 I wonder if ye hear me when I murmur
 The name of one who might as well be dead
 So far away, so very far is she—
 I wonder if ye heed and pity me?

[Pg 18]

The Wild Lover

Sway your lithe arms, ye graceful trees,
 The wind is out a-wooing!

Ye may be many, yet he sees
A way to your undoing.

Ye need not fear,
Though birds may hear
Your whispers or your sighs;
Or tell the night
Of your delight—
Nay, Nay, the birds are wise.

Your vestiture of maiden green
Doth very well adorn ye;
The wind will deem each one a queen,
And woo. He dare not scorn ye!

[Pg 19]

Homeward Bound

I have ventured on many a journey,
By land and sea;
And whether success or failure
Was granted me,
It mattered but very little—
It is good to be Homeward Bound.

When thou bravest the final voyage,
And thou must steer
Across the mysterious ocean,
Friend, have no fear;
There is only one port for the sailors
When once they are Homeward Bound!

[Pg 20]

Approaching Night

The lower'd skies are grey; the trees are bare.
A week ago they gleam'd in splendid rows
Of gold and crimson; now in gaunt despair
They stand like ghosts above new-fallen snows.

The world seems even greyer than the skies.
'Twas yesterday the homeward-honking geese
Fled as from death. They know too well what lies
Behind this sinister, foreboding peace!

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