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PRAIRIE \*\*\*



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# SONGS OF THE PRAIRIE

BY  
**ROBERT J. C. STEAD**

Author of "PRAIRIE BORN."

New York  
**THE PLATT & PECK CO.**

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[Pg 1]

## THE PRAIRIE

THE City? Oh, yes, the City  
Is a good enough place for a while,  
It fawns on the clever and witty,  
And welcomes the rich with a smile;  
It lavishes money as water,  
It boasts of its palace and hall,  
But the City is only the daughter—

The Prairie is mother of all!

The City is all artificial,  
Its life is a fashion-made fraud,  
Its wisdom, though learned and judicial,  
Is far from the wisdom of God;  
Its hope is the hope of ambition,  
Its lust is the lust to acquire,  
And the larger it grows, its condition  
Sinks lower in pestilent mire.

The City is cramped and congested,  
The haunt and the covert of crime;  
The Prairie is broad, unmolested,  
It points to the high and sublime;  
Where only the sky is above you  
And only the distance in view,  
With no one to jostle or shove you—  
It's there a man learns to be true!

[Pg 2]

Where the breeze whispers over the willows  
Or sighs in the dew laden grass,  
And the rain clouds, like big, stormy billows,  
Besprinkle the land as they pass;  
With the smudge-fire alight in the distance,  
The wild duck alert on the stream,  
Where life is a psalm of existence  
And opulence only a dream.

Where wide as the plan of creation  
The Prairies stretch ever away,  
And beckon a broad invitation  
To fly to their bosom, and stay;  
The prairie fire smell in the gloaming—  
The water-wet wind in the spring—  
An empire untrod for the roaming—  
Ah, this is a life for a king!

When peaceful and pure as a river  
They lie in the light of the moon,  
You know that the Infinite Giver  
Is stringing your spirit a-tune;  
That life is not told in the telling,  
That death does not whisper adieu,  
And deep in your bosom up-welling,  
You know that the Promise is true!

[Pg 3]

To those who have seen it and smelt it,  
To those who have loved it alone  
To those who have known it and felt it—  
The Prairie is ever their own;  
And far though they wander, unwary,  
Far, far from the breath of the plain,  
A thought of the wind on the Prairie  
Will set their blood rushing again.

Then you to the City who want it,  
Go, grovel its gain-glutted streets,  
Be one of the ciphers that haunt it,  
Or sit in its opulent seats;  
But for me, where the Prairies are reaching  
As far as the vision can scan—  
Ah, that is the prayer and the preaching  
That goes to the heart of a man!

## THE GRAMOPHONE

WHERE the lonely settler's shanty dots the plain,  
 And he sighs for friends and comradeship in vain,  
     Through the silences intense  
     Comes a sound of eloquence  
 Shrilling forth in steely, brazen, waxen strain—  
     The deep, resonant voice of Gladstone calling from the  
     tomb,  
     Or Ingersoll's deliverance before his brother's bier;  
 Then a saucy someone singing, "When the daisies are  
     in bloom,"  
     And the fife and drummers rendering "The British  
     Grenadier."

Back as far into the hills as they could get,  
 They've a roof that turns the winter and the wet,  
     They are grizzled but they're gay,  
     They've a daily matinee,  
 They are happy though they're head and ears in debt—  
     "I wish I had my old girl back again,"  
     "If the wind had only blown the other way,"  
 Uncertain voices join an old refrain  
     And repeat the same performance every day.

[Pg 5]

There's a Scotchman holding down a mining claim  
 All unknown to Fortune, Influence or Fame,  
     But a few of Harry's songs  
     Are a solace for his wrongs  
 And he sings them ev'ry evening in his "hame"—  
     "I'm courtin' Bonnie Leezy Lindsay noo,"  
     "When I get back again"—you know the lilt—  
     "We parted on the shore," "I'm fou', I'm fou',"  
     "And that's the reason noo I wear the kilt."

There's a son of Erin in Saskatchewan,  
 He's at work a half an hour before the dawn,  
     But before he goes to bunk  
     He makes a table of his trunk  
 And he sets his clock-work concert thereupon—  
     "The harp that once through Tara's halls,"  
     "St Patrick's day in the mornin',"  
     "The last rose of summer," and Fancy recalls  
     A glimpse of his "Kathleen Mavourneen."

[Pg 6]

There's an Englishman who's living in a shack,  
 He's a victim of the gramophone attack,  
     With a half-a-dozen kids  
     (He has half that many "quids")  
 But he dances with the youngest on his back—  
     Though he's living in the country of the Cree  
     The horn that hangs a fathom from his head  
 Stretches out a thousand leagues across the sea  
     And sings in dear old London town instead.

They are far from auditorium or hall,  
 But their minds are still atune to Music's call,  
     They can hear Caruso sing,  
     Or the bells of Shandon ring,  
 As they smoke and count the cracks along the wall.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

*I'm a miracle of eloquence imprisoned in the wax,  
 I'm a mental inspiration operated by a spring,  
 I'm a nightly consolation from Yukon to Halifax,  
 And the ends of all creation sit and listen while I sing:  
 I'm the Voice of all that man has sought and gained;  
 I'm the throb of ev'ry heart that ever pained;  
       I'm the Genesis of Fate,  
       I'm the Soul of Love and Hate,  
 I'm the humanly impossible attained!*

## THE PLOW

WHAT power is this that stands behind the steel?—  
 A homely implement of blade and wheel—  
 Neglected by the margin of the way,  
 And flashing back the blaze of dying day;  
 Or dragging slow across the yellow field  
 In silent prophecy of lavish yield,  
 It marks the pace of innocence and toil,  
 And taps the boundless treasure of the soil.

Before you came the red man rode the plain.  
 Untitled lord of Nature's great domain;  
 The shaggy herds, knee deep in mellow grass;  
 The lazy summer hours were wont to pass;  
 The wild goose nested by the water side;  
 The red deer roamed upon the prairie wide;  
 The black bear trod the woods in solemn might;  
 The lynx stole through the bushes in the night.

No sound of toil was heard in all the land;  
 No joyous laugh of voice or sharp command,  
 No cloud of smoke from iron funnels thrown  
 Was through the autumn hazes gently blown;  
 No edge of steel tore up the virgin sod;  
 No church its shining finger turned to God;  
 No tradesman labored over bench and tool;  
 No children chattered on their way to school.

But all the land lay desolate and bare,  
 Its wealth of plain its forest riches rare  
 Unguessed by those who saw it through their tears,  
 And Nature—miser of a thousand years—  
 Was adding still to her immense reserve  
 That shall supply the world with brawn and nerve:  
 But all lay silent, useless, and unused,  
 And useless 'twas because it was unused.

You came. Straightway the silent plain  
 Grew mellow with the glow of golden grain;  
 The axes in the solitary wood  
 Rang out where stately oak and maple stood;  
 The land became alive with busy din,  
 And as the many settled, more came in;  
 The world looked on in wonder and dismay—  
 The building of a nation in a day!

By lake and river, rock and barren waste,

A peaceful army toiled in eager haste;  
Ten thousand workers sweating in the sun  
Pressed on the task so recently begun;  
Their outworks every day were forced ahead—  
And every day they gave their toll of dead—  
Until at length the double lines of steel  
Received the steaming steed and whirling wheel!

Where yesterday the lazy bison lay  
A city glitters in the sun to-day;  
His paths are turned to streets of wood and stone,  
And thousands tread the way he trod alone;  
The mighty hum of industry and trade  
Fills all the place where once he held parade,  
And far away the unheard river's play  
Makes joyous night still brighter than the day!

Upon the plains a thousand towns arise,  
And quickly each to be a city tries;  
The sound of trade is heard on every hand  
And sturdy men rise to possess the land;  
Awhile they lingered, thinking it a dream,  
But now they flow in a resistless stream  
That seems to fill the prairie far and near,  
Yet in its vastness soon they disappear.

WHERE once the silent red man spurned the ground  
A land of peace and plenty now is found,  
A land by Nature destined to be great,  
Where every man is lord of his estate;  
Where men may dwell together in accord,  
And honest toil receive its due reward;  
Where loyal friends and happy homes are made,  
And culture follows hard the feet of trade.

[Pg 11]

This you have made it. Is it vain to hope  
The sons of such a land will climb and grope  
Along the undiscovered ways of life,  
And neither seek nor be found shunning strife,  
But ever, beckoned by a high ideal,  
Press onward, upward, till they make it real;  
With feet sure planted on their native sod,  
And will and aspirations linked with God?

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[Pg 12]

## THE MOTHERING

I had lain untrod for a million years from the line to the Arctic  
sea;  
I had dreamed strange dreams of the vast unknown,  
Of the lispng wind and the dancing zone  
Where the Northland fairies' feet had flown,  
And it all seemed good to me.

At the close of a thousand eons of sleep came a pang that was  
strange to me;  
The pang of a new life in my breast,  
The swell of a vast and a vague unrest,  
And it thrilled my soul from East to West  
As it fluttered to be free.

But I steeled my heart to the biped thing; of vast presumption  
he:

He would lure my lonely thoughts away,  
He would sport himself on the sacred clay  
Where the dust of the prehistoric lay;  
But he scorned the soul of me.

So I stretched my plains for a thousand leagues from the  
mountains to the sea;  
But he rolled them back with a steel-laid line,  
And he crumbled space by man's design  
And he filled his life with the breath of mine;  
But his love he gave not me.

Then I called him foes from the farthest north and the  
snowflake fluttered free;  
But he took him trees I had given birth,  
And he delved him coal from my bowels of earth,  
And he laughed at me as he sat in mirth;  
But he cursed the cold of me.

Then I cut him off from his fellow-men that his thought might  
turn to me;  
But he strung him a line of copper thread,  
And his fire-shod words swung overhead,  
By the fiend of air his thought was spread  
O'er hill, and plain, and lea.

Then I gave him hopes he could not define and fears that he  
could not flee;  
And he heard my cry in the long, still night,  
In my spirit-thrall I held him tight  
And his blind soul-eyes craved for the light;  
But the light he could not see.

So I held my peace till I saw him sit with children at his knee;  
And I sent them the sun, the wind and the rain,  
And the ferny slope and the flowery plain,  
And the wet night-smell of the growing grain;  
And their love they gave to me.

In the last race-birth of the sons of men a travail holdeth me;  
But out of the night of pain and tears  
A new life comes with the rolling years;  
And I fondle the child of my hope and fears,  
And it seemeth good to me.

[Pg 13]

[Pg 14]

[Pg 15]

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## HUSTLIN' IN MY JEANS

YES, I'm holdin' down the homestead here an' roughin' it a  
bit,  
It seems the only kind o' life that I was built to fit,  
For it's thirty years last summer since I staked my first  
preserve,  
An' I reckon on the whole I've prospered more than I  
deserve;  
An' my friends kep' naggin' at me for to quit this toil an'  
strife  
An' to settle in the city for the balance of my life,



An' I ain't compelled to labor—I've cached a wad of beans—  
But I'm happier when I'm hustlin' on the homestead in my  
jeans.

I've tried to loaf an' like it an' I've tried to swell about  
Where the boozey run to red-eye an' the greedy run to gout,  
An' I've tried to wear a collar an' a fancy fly-net vest,  
An' I've tried to think it pleasant just to sit around an' rest;  
An' I've mingled with the nabobs an' hee-hawed with other  
guys  
That were just as sick as I was of a life of livin' lies;  
I've mingled in society an' peeked behind the scenes—  
An' I'm happier when I'm hustlin' on the homestead in my  
jeans.

[Pg 16]

Then I got the lust for roamin' [an'](#) I rummaged round the  
earth,  
An' I got a big experience an' correspondin' girth,  
But the more I roved an' rambled the less I cared to live,  
An' I only kep' on goin' cause I'd no alternative;  
I learned through tips an' tickets an' the jostle of the cars  
That I wouldn't trade a homestead for a continent in Mars;  
An' I bid good-bye to Fashion an' her social kings an'  
queens,  
An' I filed my second homestead an' I bought a pair of jeans.

[Pg 17]

'Course it's sometimes kind o' lonely on the prairie here  
alone,  
When the night-time settles round you an' your thoughts are  
all your own,  
An' old faces flit before you like a flock o' homin' birds  
An' your heart swells with emotion that no man can put in  
words,  
An' you ponder on the Why-for, the Beginnin', an' the End;  
An' you know the only things worth while are Family an'  
Friend—  
From the trifles of existence your better judgment weans,  
An' you get the right perspective on the homestead—in your  
jeans.

There are days the sweat-drops glisten on this sun-burned  
hand of mine,  
There are nights the joints go creakin' as I crawl to bed, at  
nine,  
But I hear the horses' stampin' and the rap of Collie's tail  
An' it minds me of the Eighties an' the Old Commission Trail  
—  
Of the days we pledged our future to a land we hardly knew,  
An' the men whose brave beginnings made prosperity for  
you;  
There are men now worth their millions I remember in their  
teens,  
An' they made their start by hustlin' on the homestead in  
their jeans.

[Pg 18]

There are times when most folks figure that their life has  
been a blank;  
You may be a homeless hobo or director of a bank,  
But the thought will catch you nappin'—catch you sometime  
unawares—  
That your life has been a failure, and that no one really  
cares;  
That the world will roll without you till the Resurrection  
morn,  
An' that no one would have missed you if you never had

been born;  
An' I give you my conclusion—all that livin' really means  
Is revealed to those who hustle on the homestead in their  
jeans.

[Pg 19]

Some day I reckon I'll cash in an' file another claim  
Where the wicked cease from troublin' an' the good get in  
the game;  
Where the pews are not allotted by the fashion of your  
dress,  
An' the only thing that figures is inherent manliness—  
Give me no silk-spangled horses an' no silver-plated hearse,  
But let some student preacher read a bit of Scripture verse,  
An' find a sunny hillside where the water-willow screens,  
An' plant me on the homestead where I hustled—in my  
jeans.

---

[Pg 20]

## THE HOMESTEADER

FAR away from the din of the city,  
I dwell on the prairie alone,  
With no one to praise or to pity,  
And all the broad earth for my own;  
The fields to allure me to labor,  
The shanty to shelter my sleep,  
A league and a half to a neighbor—  
And Collie to watch if I weep.

Yes, this is my place of probation,  
Though woefully windy and bare;  
I am lord of my own habitation,  
I mock at the meaning of care;  
For here, on the edge of creation,  
Lies, far as the vision can fling,  
A kingdom that's fit for a nation—  
A kingdom—and I am the king!

The grasses aglare in the [morning](#)  
With crystalline radiance shine;  
The dew-drops are jewels adorning,  
Are jewels—and the jewels are mine;  
The heat of the sun when it shineth,  
The wet of the wind when it rains,  
Are balm to the heart that repineth—  
The Medicine Men of the plains!

[Pg 21]

I follow the plow in the breaking,  
I tap the rich treasures of Time—  
The treasure is here for the taking,  
And taking it isn't a crime;  
I ride on the rack or the reaper  
To harvest the fruit of my hand,  
And daily I know that the deeper  
I'm rooting my soul in the land.

They say there is wealth in the doing,  
That royal and rich are the gains,  
But 't isn't the wealth I am wooing  
So much as the life of the plains;

For here in the latter-day morning,  
Where Time to Eternity clings,  
Midwife to a breed in the borning,  
I behold the Beginnings of Things!

When, reckless of time and of trouble,  
I watch till the water fowl comes,  
Or, picking my steps in the stubble,  
I steal where the prairie hen drums;  
When shooting the wolf in the brushes,  
Or spearing the pike in the stream,  
Or potting the crane in the rushes—  
Ambition seems only a dream.

When darkness envelops creation,  
And shadows lie deep on the plain,  
I sit in my rude habitation  
And ponder my childhood again;  
Then voices come out of the distance,  
Far voices from over the sea,  
They call from the depths of existence—  
I know they are calling to me!

The voices of song and of motion,  
The voices of laughter and light,  
They're calling from over the ocean—  
Oh, God! could I answer to-night!  
The voices of friend and of lover,  
The voices I knew in the past—  
I turn to my pallet to smother  
The thoughts that have found me at last!

\* \* \* \* \*

*Greater than the measure of the heroes of renown,  
He is building for the future, and no hand can hold  
him down;  
Though they count him but a common man, he holds  
the Outer Gate,  
And posterity will own him as the father of the State.*

[Pg 22]

[Pg 23]

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[Pg 24]

## VAIN SUITORS

You may tell in fondest phrases  
How Venetian glory raises  
Sunlit domes and basking marbles as her streets  
flow to the sea;  
Sing of Florence or Geneva  
Or the Bay of Naples; weave a  
Web of sentiment—but leave a  
Little sentiment for me.

Where the warm Atlantic waters  
Lave your laughing sons and daughters  
By a hundred sunny cities where her tides flow full  
and free,  
Or on Caribbean beaches  
While the water pulls and reaches  
At your heart-strings—in your speeches  
Save a sentiment for me.

San Francisco's golden fulgor,  
Catalina's horticulture,  
Every symphony of gladness, every gaiety there be;  
Every land and every nation  
Somewhere claim your admiration:  
From your meed of approbation  
Save your fealty to me.

[Pg 25]

\* \* \* \* \*

Cloudless skies and peerless weather  
Link my hearts and homes together  
And the crisp, pure air of Winter vitalizes blood and  
brain;  
Prairie breezes softly blowing,  
Wheat fields' rustle—cattle lowing—  
Broader visions coming—growing—  
Woo, O lands, ye woo in vain!

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[Pg 26]

## GOD'S SIGNALMAN

WELL, no, I'm not superstitious,—at least, I don't call it  
that,—  
But when someone spins a creepy yarn I don't deny it  
flat,  
For a man who spends a lifetime with the throttle in his  
hand  
Is bound to have adventures that he cannot understand;  
I sometimes think our knowledge here is but a sorry  
show,—  
We're only on the borderland of what there is to know.  
  
I used to think a man could know all things that could  
be known;  
That he should not acknowledge any power above his  
own;  
That, however strange the circumstance, there always  
is a cause  
That is in complete obedience to some of Nature's laws;  
But I couldn't shake conviction off, no matter how I  
tried,  
And I've changed my way of thinking since the night  
that Willie died.

[Pg 27]

Yes, Willie was my little son—my greatest earthly joy—  
And wife and I just kind o' seemed to dote upon the  
boy;  
When I was out on duty she would hover round the lad,  
And treasure up his sayings to repeat them to his dad;  
And every night, at lighting time, I knew that, without  
fail,  
His baby lips were praying for the man out on the rail. .

Ah, well, for three short years we knew what such a  
treasure is,  
And we grew ever more attached to those sweet ways  
of his;  
When one day, swinging through the gate, I saw, with

blanching face,  
My wife as pale as ashes, and a doctor in the place. . . .  
I tried to go in steady, but my knees were knocking  
hard,  
And the light went out of heaven as I staggered up the  
yard.

[Pg 28]

The doctor was a friend of mine, with children of his  
own,  
But he didn't need to tell me, for a blind man would  
have known  
By the labored, quick-caught breathing, and the little  
burning brow,  
That the Visitor was ready and was waiting for him  
now.  
We sat about his bedside in silent, deep despair,  
And the years rolled down upon us as we faced each  
other there.

'Twas a little before midnight when a ring came at the  
bell,  
And the call-boy said, "Excuse me, sir, but I was sent to  
tell  
That Ninety-six is waiting, and there's no one else  
about;  
They're expecting you to take her. If you don't she can't  
go out."  
I left the answer to my wife. With lips as white as snow,  
She whispered, "Do your duty," and I said, "All right, I'll  
go."

[Pg 29]

My fireman knew my trouble, and in rough-and-ready  
way  
He let me know his heart was feeling things he couldn't  
say;  
The night was dark and moonless, but the bright stars  
overhead  
Seemed to whisper to each other, "His little boy is  
dead."  
The very locomotive seemed to read my thoughts  
aright,  
And the monster sobbed in sympathy as we bulleted the  
night.

We'd been running fast and steady till a little after two;  
All the passengers were fast asleep, except, perhaps, a  
few  
Who sat a-swapping stories in the smoker, when a sight  
Met my eyes that fairly froze my blood in terror and  
affright—  
For there, before me, standing in the halo of the light  
Was a little child outlined against the blackness of the  
night!

[Pg 30]

Oh, I could not be mistaken, I would know him  
anywhere,  
With his father's mouth and forehead, and his mother's  
eyes and hair,  
And little arms outstretched to me that seemed to coax  
and say,  
"Come, Daddy, come and kiss me, for I'm going far  
away."  
I flung the brake and throttle, and amid the hissing  
steam  
The vision grew, and waned away, and vanished as a

dream!

My fireman was beside me: "Your nerve is going, Jack;  
Let's leave the engine here and take a walk along the  
track.

The exercise will do you good." I followed as he led,  
Until we reached the gorge about a hundred yards  
ahead:

The night wind cooled my temples as we walked the  
bridge upon,

Till we sudden stopped with a sudden gasp—

—THE CENTRE SPAN WAS GONE!

\* \* \* \* \*  
\* \* \*

You may call it hallucination, as some of the others do,  
But I know that the Master took my boy that night at  
half-past two;

And the prayers of a hundred passengers had been  
offered up in vain

Had his spirit, clad in his baby dress, not stood before  
my train. . . .

I know I cried in my window-seat, and was otherwise ill-  
behaved

But the life that I lost was more to me than all the lives  
he saved.

[Pg 31]

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[Pg 32]

## GOING HOME

THE village lights grew dim behind, the snow lay vast and  
white

And silent as an icy shroud spread out upon the night;  
A wan moon struggled with the clouds and through the  
misty haze

The trails that branched to left and right were tangled as  
a maze;

The settler's horses plodded in the soft, uncertain snow;  
And, stealing cautiously behind, a Thing moved to and  
fro.

The trail was little travelled, and the pale, sad, sickly  
light

Was hindrance, rather than a help, to read the road  
aright;

A dozen miles lay stretched between the settler and his  
shack:

He thought of many things that night—not once of  
turning back.

Above the crunching of the snow he heard the rising  
wind,

But never looked—and never saw—the Thing that stole  
behind.

The trail was lost; the horses took their way across the  
plain;

The settler strove to hold the course, but strove, alas, in  
vain;

The fickle wind seemed scarce to stay a moment at a

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place—  
Now howling in a real attack, now snapping at his face;  
And nearing, leering, peering, in the ghastly, ghostly  
light,  
The Thing came softly after as it followed in the night.

A light! a light! a welcome light gleamed friendly from  
afar:

Oh, can it be—it cannot be—'tis surely not a star?  
Nay, nay, it is more warm and near, a happy farmer's  
home

That beckons to the wanderer, "You need no longer  
roam."

With eager hope they hastened on, and plied across the  
plain;

As often as the horses fell they rose to plunge again.

The hours moved on, the miles moved on, they followed  
as a dream

The waning light, the dying light, of that deceitful gleam,  
And when at last it seemed the place must almost be in  
sight,

The light went out! Oh, perfidy! Oh, murderous, mocking  
light!

'Twas well the ears grew deaf before the howling of the  
wind,

Nor heard the ghoulish chuckle of the gloating Thing  
behind.

The snow lay deep; the horses floundered with the heavy  
sleigh,

Till, plunging in a sudden drift, they tore the tongue  
away;

The sleepy driver knew it not, as through his nerveless  
hands

His hold on life was slipping with the frozen leather  
bands.

The night was calm and beautiful, the frost had ceased to  
smart. . . .

*The Thing had leapt upon him and was tearing at his  
heart!*

\* \* \* \* \*

The room was warm and cosy, and the light was soft and  
low,

Her presence seemed to radiate a tender, girlish glow,  
And when she placed her hand in his, the soft, caressing  
palm

Was cure for every trouble, and for every pain a balm:  
And she whispered, "Sweet, my sweetheart, I'll be  
faithful, I'll be true;

In the springtime, in the springtime, I will cross the sea  
to you." . . .

A little bed was fashioned in the fitful firelight glow;  
A little boy was murmuring a prayer of long ago;  
And mother-hands upon his head, that fondled in his hair,  
And sense of quiet comfort and respite from every care;  
And a pillow white and downy, and a bed so soft and  
deep,

And tired lips were lisping, "Now I lay me down to sleep."  
. . .

Again the scene was changed: A flood of mellow, amber  
light,

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That filled the soul with ecstasy of infinite delight;  
While crystal-cadenced music tinkled through the yellow  
glow,  
The lullabies of childhood and the songs of long ago;  
The sea of God on every hand in silent silver lay:  
An atom fell: its circles spread through all eternity.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Thing was gone; its work was done; a lump of lifeless  
clay  
Sat crouching, crouching, crouching in the dawning of  
the day;  
The frozen eyeballs stared upon a wilderness of snow,  
And peered into the future, to the Place no man may  
know.  
A she-wolf prowled about the spot, and sniffed below the  
sleigh,  
And howled a melancholy howl, and slunk in fear away.

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## JUST BE GLAD

FEELIN' kind of all run down?  
Mighty bad:  
Sick and tired o' life in town?  
Don't be sad:  
What you're needing isn't rest:  
Square your shoulders, raise your chest;  
Pack your turkey; go out West—  
Just be glad!

Gone astray in No-Man's-Land?  
Silly lad!  
Ought to have your carcass tanned  
With a gad:  
Should ha' kept the narrow track:  
Never mind, you can't go back;  
Things may not be quite so black—  
Just be glad!

Gone and blown in all your cash  
On a fad?  
Livin' now on soup and hash?  
Writin' Dad?  
Don't you do it. Here's a tip;  
Keep a good stiff upper lip;  
Needn't fall because you slip—  
Just be glad!

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Friends refuse to help you out?  
Don't get mad!  
You would be a lazy lout  
If they had.  
Do not envy place or pelf;  
Praise the Lord, you've got your health;  
Dig in! Be a man yourself—  
Just be glad!

All the world may say or do,



Good or bad,  
Isn't anything to you—  
Just be glad!  
Though you work at book or trade,  
Though you work with pen or spade,  
Hump yourself—you'll make the grade—  
Just be glad!

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## THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

*(Lines suggested in the camp of the Alpine Club of Canada,  
Sherbrooke Lake, B. C., August, 1911.)*

"I to the hills will lift mine eyes,"  
Of old the Psalmist sung,  
And we who clutch the worldly prize,  
With Earth's distractions wrung,  
Still turn our fevered fancy's gaze  
Where snowy summits greet the day,  
Where Nature guards her mysteries,  
And Time becomes Eternity

Where, changeless in eternal change,  
The Rockies clip the clouds,  
And glacial lakes and granite range  
Sleep, in their snowy shrouds;  
Where silence hushes discontent,  
And petty fears are lost in space,  
The Builder of the firmament  
Still meets His people, face to face!

O barren cares that bitter life,  
O hopes unwisely dear,  
O fruitless fallacy and strife,  
O social, sham veneer!—  
I to the hills will lift mine eyes,  
Where mantling cloud or cornice clings,  
To catch a glimpse of paradise,  
And turn again—to little things!

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## A PRAIRIE HEROINE

THEY were running out the try-lines, they were staking out  
the grade;  
Through the hills they had to measure, through the sloughs  
they had to wade;  
They were piercing unknown regions, they were crossing  
nameless streams,  
With the prairie for a pillow and the sky above their dreams,  
They were mapping unborn cities in the age-long pregnant  
clay:  
When they came upon a little mound across the right-of-way.

There were violets growing on it, and a buttercup or two,  
That whispered of affection ever old and ever new,  
And a little ring of whitewashed stones, bright in the  
summer sun,  
But of marble slab or granite pile or pillar there was none;  
And across the sleeping prairie lay a little, low-built shack,  
With a garden patch before it and a wheat field at its back.

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"Well, boys, we'd better see him, and he hadn't ought to  
kick,  
For we'll give him time to move it if he does it pretty quick."  
But scarcely had the foreman spoke when straight across  
the farm  
They saw the settler coming with a rifle on his arm;  
Some would ha' hiked for cover but they had no place to  
run,  
But most of them decided they would stay and see the fun.

The farmer was the first to speak: "I hate to interfere,  
And mighty glad I am to see the railway comin' near,  
But before you drive your pickets across this piece of land  
You ought to hear the story, or you will not understand:  
It's the story of a girl who was as true as she was brave,  
And all that now remains of her is in that little grave.

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"I didn't want to bring her when I hit the trail out West,  
I knew I shouldn't do it, and I did my level best  
To coax her not to come out for a year or two at least,  
But to stay and take it easy with her friends down in the  
East;  
But while I coaxed and argued I was feelin' mighty glum,  
And right down in my heart I kep' a-hopin' she would come.

"Well, by rail and boat and saddle we got out here at last,  
A-livin' in the future, and forgettin' of the past;  
We built ourselves a little home, and in our work and care  
It seemed to me she always took what was the lion's share;  
God knows just what she suffered, but she hid it with a  
smile,  
And made out that she thought I was the only thing worth  
while.

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"She stood it through the summer and the warm, brown  
days of fall,  
And of all the voices calling her she would not hear the call;  
But when the winter settled with its cold, white pall of snow  
She seemed to whiten with it, but she thought I didn't know;  
She tried to keep her spirits up and laugh my fears away,  
But I saw her growing thin and ever weaker day by day.

"At last I couldn't stand it any longer, so I said,  
'I think you'd better try and spend a day or two in bed  
While I go for a doctor. It's only sixty miles.'  
She gave a little wistful look, half hidden in her smiles,  
And said, 'Perhaps you'd better, though I think I'll be all  
right  
When the spring comes.' . . . Well, I started out that night.

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"I made the trip on horseback, by the guiding Polar star  
And a dozen times the distance never seemed one half so  
far.  
But the doctor had gone out of town,—just where, no one  
could say,  
And a lump rose in my chest that fairly took my breath away.  
But I daren't stay there thinking, and my search for him was  
vain,

So I bought some wine and brandy and I started home again.

"Forgetful of my horse, I spent the whole night on the road,  
Till early in the morning he collapsed beneath his load;  
I saw the brute was done for, and although it made me cry,  
I hacked into his jug'lar vein and left him there to die;  
And then I shouldered the supplies and staggered on alone,  
And thinking of my wife's distress I quite forgot my own.

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"She must ha' watched all night for me, for in the morning  
grey  
She saw me stagger in the snow and fall beside the way  
And God knows how she did it—she was only skin and bone  
—  
But she came out here and found me and dragged me home  
alone,  
And she took the precious liquor that had cost us all so dear,  
And poured it down this worthless hulk that's standin' blatin'  
here. . . .

"I guess you know what happened—I lived, she passed away;  
I robed her in her wedding-dress and laid her in the clay;  
And every spring I plant the flowers that grow upon her  
grave,  
For I hold the spot as sacred as the Arimathæen's cave;  
And when the winter snows have come, and all is white and  
still,  
I spread a blanket on the mound to keep out frost and chill.

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"Folks say I've got a screw loose, that I've gone to acting  
queer,  
But I sometimes hear her speaking, and I know she's always  
near;  
And sometimes in the night I feel the pressure of her hand,  
And for a blessed hour I share with her the Promised Land:  
—

Let man or devil undertake to desecrate my dead  
And as sure as God's in heaven I will pump him full of lead."

They were rough-and-ready railway men who stood about  
the spot,  
They were men that lied and gambled they were men that  
drank and fought,  
But some of them were sneezing, and some were coughing  
bad,  
And some were blowing noses on anything they had;  
And some of them were swallowing at lumps that shouldn't  
come,  
And some were swearing softly, and some were simply  
dumb.

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At last the foreman found his voice: "I guess your claim is  
sound;  
I wouldn't care to run a track across that piece of ground. . .

·  
We'll have to change our lay-out . . . but I hope . . . we have  
the grace  
To build a fitting monument to mark that holy place;  
Put me down for a hundred; now, boys, how much for you?"  
And they answered in a chorus, "We'll see the business  
through."

\* \* \* \* \*

The passengers upon a certain railway o'er the plain  
See a shining shaft of marble from the windows of the train,

But they do not know the story of the girl-wife in the snow  
And the broken-hearted farmer with his lonely life of woe,  
And none of them have guessed that the deflection in the  
line  
Is the railway builders' tribute to a prairie heroine.

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## THE SEER

In the dingy dust of his deerskin tent sat the chief of a dying  
race,  
And the lake that lapt at his wigwam door threw back a  
frowning face,  
And a sightless squaw at the centre-pole crooned low in a  
hybrid speech,  
When a man of God swept round the point and landed on the  
beach.

The heavy eyes grew bright with fire, the lips shaped to a  
sneer—  
"Welcome, my paleface brother, what good news brings you  
here?  
Are you come with the voice of healing, with the book of  
your blameless breed,  
To soothe my soul with comfort while my body gnaws with  
need?

"Welcome, O paleface brother; come, what have you to fear?  
Mayhap the redskin chieftain can teach as well as hear;  
And while we sing your sacred songs and breathe your  
mystic prayer,  
Who knows what inspiration may come on the ev'ning air? . .

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"Listen; you are a scholar, schooled in the paleface lore:  
'Tis said a dying saint may [sometimes](#) see the shining shore;  
That closing eyes peer far beyond the realm of mortal sight,  
—  
Who knows but that a dying race may read the road aright?

"A dying race! We know it; the land is ours no more,  
No more we roam the prairies as in the days of yore;  
The brave, free spirit that was ours is crushed and passed  
away,  
And bodies without spirits are predestined to decay.

"No matter. In the summertime the flowers bloom in the  
grass,  
The startled insects flood the fields and chirrup as you pass,  
The birds sing in the bushes; but before the wintry blast  
The flowers and the insects and the little birds are past.

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"Yet once again the spring will come, the flowers will bloom  
again,  
And insects chirrup blithely where the former ones are lain;  
The white snows of the wintertime will vanish in the heat,  
And out-door life and color will follow their defeat.

"Can the paleface read the riddle? Has he eyes to see the  
signs?

Or thinketh he that snow will lie forever on the pines?  
That housed-up life can triumph for the mastery of state,  
Or cushioned chairs produce a race destined to dominate?

"Behold, the things your hands have done, the power your  
arts have won—  
Behold, those things shall vanish as the snow before the sun;  
The snow that smothered out the red—ah, hear it if you can

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—  
Shall leave the earth as suddenly, *and leave it brown and  
tan.*

"Hear ye a little lesson—surely ye know its worth—  
Only an out-door nation can be master of the earth;  
Soon as ye seek your couches, soft with the spoils of trade—  
See well to your outer trenches before the mines are laid!

"Hear ye a little lesson—can ye the truth divine?  
Milk ye may mix with water, and water will mix with wine;  
Mix as ye may on your prairies, mix in your hope, and toil,  
But know in all your mixing that water won't mix with oil!"

In the dingy dusk of his deerskin tent sat the chief of a dying  
race,  
And the glow of holy prophecy lit up his rugged face,  
And the foremost light of the setting sun fell far on an  
eastern land,—  
*And who shall save the paleface if he will not understand?*

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## THE SON OF MARQUIS NODDLE

HE is brand-new out from England and he thinks he  
knows it all—  
(There's a bloomin' bit o' goggle in his eye)  
The "colonial" that crosses him is going to get a fall—  
(There's a seven-pound revolver on his thigh).  
He's a son of Marquis Noddle, he's a nephew of an earl,  
In the social swim of England he's got 'em all awlirl.  
He's as confident as Cæsar and as pretty as a girl—  
Oh, he's out in deadly earnest, do or die.

They will spot him in the cities by the cowhide on his feet  
—

(They were built for crushing cobblestones at 'ome)  
And the giddy girls will giggle when they see him on the  
street—

(There's a brand-new cowboy hat upon his dome).  
He has come from home and kindred to the land beyond  
the sea,

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To the far-famed land of plenty, to the country of the  
free,  
But he can't forget he owns it from Cape Race to Behring  
Sea—

He is coming just as Cæsar would to Rome.

When his pile is getting slender he'll go looking for a job,  
(And he thinks he ought to get it, don't-cher-know)  
But he finds that he must mingle with the common city  
mob

(How *can* they think that he would stoop so low?).  
So he hikes him to the country, where the rustics will be  
proud  
To salute him when they meet him, and to whisper, nice  
and loud,  
"He's the son of Marquis Noddle,—you would know him  
in a crowd"—  
They will pay him there the homage that they owe.

In the little country village he will manufacture mirth—  
(For it's there they take the measure of a swell)  
They will soon proceed to teach him that he doesn't own  
the earth  
(With a quit-claim on the sun and moon as well).  
They will show him that the country isn't altogether slow,  
And that they can travel any pace that he's a mind to go;  
He will be a right good fellow till they run him out of  
dough—  
Oh, it is a tale of merriment they tell!

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So to keep his bones together he goes working on a farm,  
(Where they get up at a little after two)  
Where they think to take him down a peg will not do him  
any harm,  
(And they sleep when there is nothing else to do).  
Where they work him like a nigger nearly twenty hours a  
day,  
And they don't disguise the fact that they consider him a  
jay,  
And he eats so much and sleeps so much he isn't worth  
his pay—  
Oh, it doesn't matter that his blood is blue.

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He decides to do a season as a cowboy in the West,  
(Where they call a man a boy until he's dead)  
And he tries to walk a-swagger with a military chest,  
(And he isn't overslept or overfed).  
They will set him breaking bronchos, though it's little to  
his mind;  
With many new-learned epithets he'll perforate the wind  
—  
How can he know the boys have stuck a thistle on  
behind?  
He will end the exhibition on his head.

They will fill him full of liquor that'll frizzle his inside,  
(In the cooler he can square it with his God).  
He will spend his nights in places where the *demi-monde*  
reside,  
(In the morning he'll be minus watch and wad).  
They'll abuse him as a youngster, they will mock him as a  
man,  
They'll make his life a thorny path in every way they can,  
Till he curses his existence and the day that it began,  
And he wishes he was rotting in the sod.

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He will write long tales to England, tales of bitterness  
and woe,  
(They will print 'em in the papers over there).  
He will tell them pretty nearly everything he doesn't  
know,  
(And they'll take it all for gospel over there).  
He will tell them that the country isn't fit for gentlemen,  
That any who escape from it do not come back again,  
He is handy with his language and he wields a bitter pen

—  
To the truth of each assertion he would swear.

He's a growler, he's a growser, he's a nuisance, he's a  
bum,  
(And the country hasn't any room for such)  
And they class him in the papers as "European scum,"  
(They would rather have the Irish or the Dutch).  
He's the butt of every jester, he's the mark of every joke,  
He is wearing borrowed trousers—he has put his own in  
soak—  
He's a useless good-for-nothing, beaten, buffeted, and  
broke,  
And of sympathy he won't get over-much.

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\* \* \* \* \*

In a dozen years you'll find him with a section of his own,  
(He had to learn his lesson at the start)  
With a happy wife and children he is trying to atone—  
(For he loves the country now with all his heart).  
He's a son of dear old England, he's a hero, he's a brick;  
He's the kind you may annihilate but you can never lick,  
For he played and lost, and played and lost, and stayed  
and took the trick;  
In a world of men he'll play a manly part.

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## THE PRODIGALS

KNEE-DEEP our prairies link the seas,  
Flood-full our voiceless rivers wend;  
We hold unturned the larder keys  
On which the future years depend:  
And shall we suffer alien throngs  
Usurp the land to us belongs?

What though we are to fortune born  
And all our paths are paved with gold?  
We flaunt our folly up to scorn,  
Because we keep not what we hold:  
Why should we rob our right of birth  
To foster all the breeds of earth?

We picture with unfeigned dismay  
Man-glutted lands of other flags,  
They multiply but to decay,  
And rot in pestilence and rags;  
Why hasten we to emulate  
These helpless tragedies of Fate?

The land our children's sons will need,  
That land we have wide open thrown  
To heathen knaves of other breed  
And paunchy pirates of our own:  
We give away earth's greatest prize,  
And pat ourselves, and call us wise.

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No father he who to the slums  
For husband to his child would send,

And no one worthy of her comes  
She lives a maiden to the end:  
Yet we have placed our virgin trust  
In spawn of Continental lust.

If dumb we be to Reason's cries—  
Our children's cause she pleads in vain—  
Our outraged sons at length will rise  
And seize their heritage again;  
And fools, who prate of vested right,  
Will either cease to prate—or fight.

The land is ours, the land will keep,  
And Time is nowise near its end;  
We hold our birthright all too cheap  
Its sacredness to comprehend;  
In after years our sons will say,  
"Why frittered ye the land away?"

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## THE SQUAD OF ONE

SERGEANT BLUE of the Mounted Police was a so-so kind of a guy;  
He swore a bit, and he lied a bit, and he boozed a bit on the  
sly;  
But he held the post at Snake Creek Bend for country and  
home and God,  
And he cursed the first and forgot the rest—which wasn't the  
least bit odd.

Now the life of the North West Mounted Police breeds an all-  
round kind of man;  
A man who can jug a down-South thug when he rushes the  
red-eye can;  
A man who can pray with a dying bum or break up a range  
stampede—  
Such are the men of the Mounted Police and such are the men  
they breed.

The snow lay deep at the Snake Creek post and deep to east  
and west,  
And the Sergeant had made his ten-league beat and settled  
down to rest  
In his two-by-four that they called a "post," where the flag flew  
overhead,  
And he took a look at his monthly mail, and this is the note he  
read:

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"To Sergeant Blue of the Mounted Police at the post of Snake  
Creek Bend,  
From U. S. Marshal of County Blank, greetings to you, my  
friend,  
They's a team of toughs give us the slip, though they shot up a  
couple of blokes,  
And we reckon they's hid in Snake Creek Gulch and posin' as  
farmer folks.

"They's as full of sin as a barrel of booze and as quick as a cat  
with a gun.  
So if you happen to hit their trail be first to start the fun;



And send out your strongest squad of men and round them up  
if you can,  
For dead or alive we want them here. Yours truly, Jack  
McMann."

And Sergeant Blue sat back and smiled, "Ho, here is a chance  
of game!  
Folks 'round here have been so good that life is getting tame;  
I know the lie of Snake Creek Gulch—where I used to set my  
traps—  
I'll blow out there to-morrow and I'll bring them in—perhaps."

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Next morning Sergeant Blue, arrayed in farmer smock and  
jeans,  
In a jumper sleigh he had made himself set out for the  
evergreens  
That grow on the bank of Snake Creek Gulch by a homestead  
shack he knew,  
And a smoke curled up from the chimney-pipe to welcome  
Sergeant Blue.

"Aha, and that looks good to me," said the Sergeant to the  
smoke,  
"For the lad that owns this homestead shack is East in his  
wedding-yoke;  
There are strangers here and I'll bet a farm against a horn of  
booze  
That they are the bums that are predestined to dangle in a  
noose."

So he drove his horse to the shanty door and hollered a loud  
"Good-day,"  
And a couple of men with fighting-irons came out beside the  
sleigh,  
And the Sergeant said, "I'm a stranger here and I've driven a  
weary mile;  
If you don't object I'll just sit down by the stove in the shack  
awhile."

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So the Sergeant sat and smoked and talked of the home he  
had left down East,  
And the cold, and the snow, and the price of land, and the life  
of man and beast,  
But all of a sudden he broke it off with, "Neighbors, take a  
nip?  
There's a horn of the best you'll find out there in my jumper, in  
the grip."

So one of the two went out for it, and as soon as he closed the  
door  
The other one staggered back as he gazed up the nose of a  
forty-four,  
But the Sergeant wasted no words with him, "Now, fellow,  
you're on the rocks,  
And a noise as loud as a mouse from you and they'll take you  
out in a box."

So he fastened the bracelets to his wrists and his legs with  
some binder-thread,  
And he took his knife and he took his gun and he rolled him  
onto the bed;  
And then as number two came in he said, "If you want to live,  
Put up your dukes and behave yourself or I'll make you into a  
sieve."

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And when he had coupled them each to each, and laid them

out on the bed,  
"It's cold, and I guess we'd better eat before we go," he said.  
So he fried some pork and he warmed some beans, and he set  
out the best he saw,  
And they ate thereof, and he paid for it, according to British  
law.

That night in the post sat Sergeant Blue with paper and pen in  
hand,  
And this is the word he wrote and signed and mailed to a  
foreign land:  
"To U. S. Marshall of County Blank, greetings I give to you;  
My squad has just brought in your men, and the squad was  
"Sergeant Blue."

*There are things unguessed, there are tales untold, in the life  
of the great lone land,  
But here is a fact that the prairie-bred alone may understand,  
That a thousand miles in the fastness the fear of the law  
obtains,  
And the pioneers of justice were the "Riders of the Plains."*

[Pg 69]

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[Pg 70]

## ALKALI HALL

WHEN Lord Landseeker came out West to have a look  
around,  
And spend a little money if the right thing could be  
found,  
He hadn't breathed the prairie air more than a day or  
two  
Until he was the centre of a philanthropic crew  
Who sought to show His Lordship all the shortcuts to  
success  
(Though why they should have troubled, His [Lordship](#)  
couldn't guess,  
For each was losing money, as he candidly confessed,  
Which seemed to be a fashion with the dealers in the  
West).

Thus His [Lordship](#) grew suspicious that his "friends"  
would turn him down,  
And he quietly bought a ticket to a little country town;  
But he didn't know the message that was flashed along  
the wire  
To a simple country dealer in the land of his desire;  
And it read: "Look out for Goggles, he'll be with you this  
a. m."  
And the crowd around the station—well, he merely  
smiled to them,  
And thought it jolly decent they'd assemble,  
don'tcherknow,  
And file along behind him as they followed, in a row.

[Pg 71]

The snow had fallen softly all the calm November night,  
And the morning found the praires with a covering of  
white;  
But His Lordship took a citizen who "happened" in his  
way,  
And they drove into the country for the most part of the

day,  
Until they reached a section that was flat and free from  
stone,  
And the citizen remarked about a fellow he had known  
Who offered thirty dollars for this section in the fall,  
But the owner wanted forty, or he wouldn't sell at all.

[Pg 72]

Then His Lordship drove across it, and it seemed to catch  
his eye,  
And he whispered to the driver, "That's the section I will  
buy;"  
So in town they found the owner, who was very loath to  
sell,  
But he finally consented, if His Lordship wouldn't tell  
That the price was forty dollars by the acre; this agreed,  
A lawyer drew the papers and His Lordship got the deed,  
And he sailed across the ocean with the satisfying  
thought  
That he'd followed his own judgment in the bargain he  
had bought.

The winter snows had vanished and the spring was  
growing late,  
When Lord Landseeker came again to view his real  
estate,  
And he drove out in a buggy to where his section lay,  
And his heart was very happy as he smoked along the  
way  
Till the section burst upon them, and he scarce believed  
his sight,  
For the land lay in the sunshine, flashing back a snowy  
white . . . . .  
And His Lordship stooped and felt it, and he heaved a  
little sigh,  
As the knowledge dawned upon him that his land was  
—*alkali!*

[Pg 73]

His Lordship did some thinking as they journeyed back to  
town,  
And his wonted happy features were o'ershadowed with  
a frown;  
But he neither crawled nor blustered, neither bluffed nor  
swore nor kicked,  
(For the men from little England never know when they  
are licked),  
But he advertised for tenders for construction on the  
land,  
And the buildings he erected were the best he could  
command;  
With a hundred rooms for students, and quarters for the  
staff,  
And the workmen often wondered what made His  
Lordship laugh!

[Pg 74]

In the papers of Old England there appeared a little ad,  
For the benefit of parents whose sons were going bad;  
"Teach your boys the art of farming in the great  
Canadian West;  
Our instruction is unrivalled, our curriculum the best;  
There's a grate in every chamber and a bath in every  
hall,  
And a full dress-suited dinner every ev'ning, free to all;  
There is tennis, polo, marksmanship, and half the day in  
bed,  
And we make them into farmers for a hundred pounds a

head."

\* \* \* \* \*

His Lordship's college prospers and is crowded to the  
doors  
With "students" playing poker while the "servants" do the  
chores;  
What they do not know of farming they make up in other  
lines  
They are judges of tobacco and connoisseurs of wines;  
They are experts at the races and at sundry other games  
—  
Though they couldn't tell the breeching of the harness  
from the hames—  
Though they're far from home and kindred they occasion  
no alarm,  
*That was what their parents wanted when they sent them  
out to farm.*

[Pg 75]

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[Pg 76]

## PRAIRIE BORN

WE have heard the night wind howling as we lay alone in  
bed;  
We have heard the grey goose honking as he journeyed  
overhead;  
We have smelt the smoke-wraith flying in the hot October  
wind,  
And have fought the fiery demon that came roaring down  
behind;  
We have seen the spent snow sifting through the key-hole of  
the door,  
And the frost-line crawling, crawling, like a snake, along the  
floor;  
We have felt the storm-fiend wrestle with the rafters in his  
might,  
And the baffled blizzard shrieking through the turmoil of the  
night.

We have felt the April breezes warm along the plashy plains;  
We have mind-marked to the cadence of the falling April  
rains;  
We have heard the crash of water where the snow-fed rivers  
run,  
Seen a thousand silver lakelets lying shining in the sun;  
We have known the resurrection of the Springtime in the  
land,  
Heard the voice of Nature calling and the words of her  
command,  
Felt the thrill of springtime twilight and the vague,  
unfashioned thought  
That the season's birthday musters from the hopes we had  
forgot.

[Pg 77]

We have heard the cattle lowing in the silent summer nights;  
We have smelt the smudge-fire fragrance—we have seen the  
smudge-fire lights—  
We have heard the wild duck grumbling to his mate along  
the bank;

Heard the thirsty horses snorting in the stream from which  
they drank;  
Heard the voice of Youth and Laughter in the long, slow-  
gloaming night;  
Seen the arched electric, splendor of the Great North's livid  
light;  
Read the reason of existence—felt the touch that was divine  
—  
And in eyes that glowed responsive saw the End of God's  
design.

[Pg 78]

We have smelt the curing wheat fields and the scent of new-  
mown hay;  
We have heard the binders clatter through the dusty autumn  
day;  
We have seen the golden stubble gleaming through the  
misty rain;  
We have seen the plow-streaks widen as they turned it down  
again;  
We have heard the threshers humming in the cool  
September night;  
We have seen their dark procession by the straw-piles' eerie  
light;  
We have heard the freight trains groaning, slipping,  
grinding, on the rail,  
And the idle trace chains jingle as they jogged along the  
trail.

We have felt the cold of winter—cursed by those who know  
it not—  
We have braved the blizzard's vengeance, dared its most  
deceptive plot;  
We have learned that hardy races grow from hardy  
circumstance,  
And we face a dozen dangers to attend a country dance;  
Though our means are nothing lavish we have always time  
for play,  
And our social life commences at the closing of the day;  
We have time for thought and culture, time for friendliness  
and friend,  
And we catch a broader vision as our aspirations blend.

[Pg 79]

We have hopes to others foreign, aims they cannot  
understand,  
We, the "heirs of all the ages," we, the first-fruits of the land;  
Though we think with fond affection of the shores our  
fathers knew,  
And we honor all our brothers—for a brother's heart is true  
—  
Though we stand with them for progress, peace, and unity,  
and power,  
Though we die with them, if need be, in our nation's darkest  
hour—  
Still the prairies call us, call us, when all other voices fail,  
And the call we knew in childhood is the call that must  
prevail.

[Pg 80]

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[Pg 81]

*(In some circles the term "colonial" is still allowed  
to imply inferiority and dependence.)*

ONLY a Colonial!

Only a man of nerve and heart  
Who has spurned the ease of the life "at home,"  
Only a man who would play his part  
In a new breed-birth on a distant loam;  
Only a man of sense and worth  
Who is not afraid of the ends of earth.

Only a Colonial!

Only a man who has cornered Fate  
And matched his strength with the Unattained;  
Only the guard at the Outer Gate,  
Who holds for you what he has gained,  
That your children, seized of a better sense,  
May share with him Toil's recompense.

Only a Colonial!

Only a man who has bridged the deep,  
And stained the map a British hue,  
Who builds an Empire while ye sleep  
And deeds the ownership to you.  
'Tis the Viking blood which gave you birth  
That has driven him to the ends of earth.

[Pg 82]

Only a Colonial!

Wherever the flag that ye think is great  
Is flown to the farthest winds that blow,  
Wherever the colonists ye berate  
In their blind faith-vision onward go,  
Ye may find ye hearts that are British still—  
In your self-conceit do ye count them nil?

Only a Colonial!

Rough as the bark of his forest tree  
His ways may seem to the fat and sleek,  
But ye owe your Empire to such as he,  
Though the hoar-frost glisten on his cheek;  
He has carried your flag where ye dared not go,  
And little ye reckon of the debt ye owe.

Only a Colonial!

No doubt he is raw on your social laws  
And grates on your sense of caste and creed,  
But he lives too near to Facts and Cause  
To study heraldry and breed;  
And, knowing man in his primal state,  
He scorns the claims of the social great.

[Pg 83]

Only a Colonial!

The name in cheap contempt ye fling,  
Is not the whim of birth or chance,  
We well ignore the flippant sting,  
Or charge it to your ignorance;  
The colonist, and sons of his,  
Have made the Empire what it is.

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[Pg 84]

# LITTLE TIM TROTTER

LITTLE Tim Trotter was born in the West,  
Where the prairie lies sunny and brown;  
Never was, surely, so welcome a guest  
In the stateliest halls of the town;  
For Little Tim Trotter was thoughtful and brave,  
And a lover of summer and shower,  
And Little Tim Trotter took less than he gave  
To the hearts that were under his power.

Little Tim Trotter would play in the sun,  
Or lie in the buffalo grass,  
And in fancy he saw the wild buffalo run  
And the brave-riding Indians pass;  
And with eyes that were deep as the infinite blue  
He would picture himself at their head,  
For no one so young as this hunter-man knew  
That the herds and the riders were dead.

Little Tim Trotter would lie in his bed  
While the fire-light played low on the floor,  
And strange were the thought that in Little Tim's  
head  
Played low like the fire at the door;  
The hopes that were his, and the wonders he knew,  
And the yearning he had in his heart,  
With the glimmering light of the future in view,  
And Little Tim just at the start!

[Pg 85]

Little Tim Trotter has heard the long call  
And has answered with joy and surprise,  
And the thoughts and the things that are hid from us  
all  
To-day are revealed to his eyes;  
And he rides in the van of his buffalo herd,  
Or in camp with his Indians brave;  
But Little Tim Trotter speaks never a word  
Through the mound of a little green grave.

[Pg 86]

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## THE VORTEX

HE farmed his own half-section and was doing fairly well;  
There were seasons when the yield was rather small,  
But he always had his living and had always stuff to sell,  
And a little to his credit in the fall;  
But he wearied of his labor and he turned a wistful  
eye  
Where the City flashed its glamour on the stranger  
passing by;  
He was sick of hogs and cattle—he was sick of barn  
and sty,  
And the City sucked him in.

He was doing homestead duties—he was in his second  
year,  
And his quarter was the finest out-of-doors;  
He'd a neighbor in the township—and they called that

pretty near,  
And he only had to eat and do the chores;  
Now he should have been contented with a  
kingdom of his own;  
He'd a fiddle and a rifle and a "bally gramophone" .  
.  
He was sick of isolation, sick of living there alone,  
And the City sucked him in.

[Pg 87]

He owned a little country store and traded goods for  
eggs;  
He was salesman, buyer, manager and clerk;  
And the farmers gathered in his shop and sat around on  
kegs  
While they smoked and [wished](#) they didn't have to  
work;  
He was tired of tasting butter that he didn't dare  
condemn,  
He was tired of narrow farmers, he was tired of  
serving them,  
And he thought him of the City, where they close at  
six P. M.,  
And the City sucked him in.

He ran a country paper in the town of Easy-go,  
And he hustled news and helped to "dis" the "dead";  
He was editor and devil, he was master of the show,  
And the Union had no halter on his head;  
But he couldn't raise his circulation over twenty  
quires,  
He was tired of washing rollers, he was tired of  
building fires,  
He was tired of eulogizing men he knew were  
mostly liars,  
And the City sucked him in.

[Pg 88]

He practised law and real estate and owned a house and  
lot;  
He'd a client every once-awhile or so;  
He drove into the country when the summer days were  
hot,  
Or in winter for a sleigh-ride in the snow;  
He'd enough to live in comfort and he always paid  
his bills,  
But he tired of country customs and he wanted  
Fashion's frills;  
He was sick of fire insurance, he was sick of  
drawing wills,  
And the City sucked him in.

He'd a loyal congregation and his views were orthodox  
Though his salary was less than he was worth,  
He'd a personal regard for the future of his flocks,  
And he shared with them their sorrow and their mirth;  
But he longed for larger service and for bright  
companionship,  
And a stipend that would justify his wife to take a  
trip;  
And he read his resignation and he packed his little  
grip,  
And the City sucked him in.

[Pg 89]

She was just a country maiden with ambitions of her  
own,  
She could wash and she could churn and she could



cook,  
But she longed for broader vision and a bigger, better  
zone,  
And she studied all about it in a book;  
She'd a home and she had kindred, she'd a roof  
above her head,  
She had time for work and leisure, she'd a chance  
to love and wed;  
But they saw her leave the village—they had better  
seen her dead—  
And the City sucked her in.

[Pg 90]

Now there's one of them a millionaire and one of them in  
jail,  
And one of them is working on the street;  
And one is washing dishes, and one has "hit the trail,"  
For six have drunk the sorrows of defeat;  
And one that's never spoken of where once she was  
supreme,  
And one—they found him floating in an eddy of the  
stream:  
They have paid the price of knowledge, they have  
dreamed their little dream:  
And the City sucked them in.

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[Pg 91]

## THE OLD GUARD

KNEW you the men of the Old Guard? Men of the camp and trail;  
Guard of the van when Time began in the land of grass and gale,  
Of a sky-wide land they seized command where the mightiest  
prevail.

Who were the men of the Old Guard? Giants of strength and will,  
Trained in the school of hard-luck rule and daring to die or kill;  
Staking their lives, and their young, and wives, on the road up  
Fortune's hill.

Whence were the men of the Old Guard? Heroes of '82;  
From swamp and ledge and ocean's edge they came to see and  
do,  
And they failed at first, and the land they cursed, but they stayed  
and struggled through.

Hope of the men of the Old Guard? Little but hope was theirs;  
With empty hand in an untried land they clutched at wheat and  
tares,  
And home at night by the wood-fire light was answer to their  
prayers.

[Pg 92]

Way of the men of the Old Guard? What of their end and way?  
You may find their bones by the lime-white stones where the sun-  
dried sleugh-holes lay,  
For the Goddess Trade is a costly jade, and they were [the](#) ones to  
pay.

Joy of the men of the Old Guard? The joy of the brave and true;  
With joy they paced where Death grimaced and his icy vapors  
blew,  
And with steady tread they bore their dead with the faith of the

chosen few.

What of the men of the Old Guard? Ask of the arching skies,  
The grass that waves on their leafy graves is lispings their  
lullabies,  
And the lives they spent are their monument and their title to  
Paradise.

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[Pg 93]

## KID McCANN

WHERE the farthest foothills flatten to a circle-sweeping  
plain,  
And the cattle lands surrender to the onward march of  
grain,  
Where the prairies stretch unbroken to the corners of the  
sky,  
And the foremost wheat fields rustle in the warm winds  
droning by—  
There a crippled cowboy batches in the haunts of old-time  
herds,  
And the balance of the story is repeated in his words:

So you never heard how I lost my leg and hobble now on a  
crutch?  
So far as the story relates to me it can't concern you much,  
For it's really the story of Kid McCann and the price that a  
girl will pay  
For the fellow she sets her fancy on, as only a woman may;  
It isn't every girl who proves her faithfulness in flames,  
But fellows who listen with moistened eyes speak softly of  
other names.

[Pg 94]

Ned McCann owned the Double Star 'way back in the early  
days;  
He had come out here with a sickly wife and a kid he hoped  
to raise  
Where the climate suited the feeble-lunged, but life was  
scarce at its brim,  
Till a little mound by a [prairie](#) hill held half of the world for  
him;  
And his double love would have spoiled the child had she  
been like me or you,  
But her only thought was for her dad and the mother she  
scarcely knew.

'Course, she was bred to the ranges, and before she had  
reached her teens  
She could straddle a nag with the best of us and ride in her  
smock and jeans  
Till we all caved in, and she thought it fun to camp with the  
round-up bunch,  
And she shared her pillow and shared our sky and shared  
our pipe and lunch,  
And all of us mad in love with her, but she was only a kid,  
And she never dreamt what our feelings were, or the love-  
struck things we did.

[Pg 95]

But even girls grow older, and, though always kind and  
sweet,

There came a day when she realized that we were at her  
feet,  
But I had never spoken, nor anyone in the camp,  
When in came a foreign puncher, a thoroughbred black-leg  
scamp,  
And we who had known her since childhood saw, in our  
unbelieving eyes,  
This wily sinner setting himself to carry off the prize.

Of course it couldn't be stood for, and little as I might like,  
It fell to my lot to intimate to him it was time to hike,  
Which I did in straightforward manner, in a way to be  
understood,  
And he looked at me with a sulky scowl that boded none of  
us good;  
But he did as he was ordered, to be absent before night,  
And we lost his form in the shadowy East as he cantered out  
of sight.

[Pg 96]

Next day, as I rode on my cayuse, apart from the rest of the  
gang,  
I felt a sudden rip in my leg like the jab of a red-hot tang;  
And my horse went down below me, with my leg crushed in  
the clay,  
And over me leered that fiendish face, and he grinned, and  
rode away;  
Rode away to the eastward,—I saw him fade in the sky,  
And crushed and pinned from hip to heel I counted the  
hours to die.

How long I lay I could never tell, for the hours were days to  
me,  
Till struck with sudden terror I tore at my wounded knee,  
For the east wind carried a smoky smell, and I read in its  
fiery breath  
That half-a-mile of sun-dried grass was all between me and  
death;  
With my hunting-knife I hacked my leg, but I couldn't cut the  
bone,  
So I set myself as best I could to face my fate alone.

[Pg 97]

The fire came on like a hungry fiend on the wings of the  
rising wind,  
And I wouldn't care to tell you all the things that were in my  
mind;  
I saw the sun through the swirling smoke and the blue sky  
far above,  
And I bade good-bye to the things of earth and the dearer  
hopes of love;  
And I figured that I had closed accounts for life's uncertain  
span,  
When a smoke-blind broncho galloped up and there sat Kid  
McCann!

There wasn't much time for talking, with the death-roll in  
our ears,  
But we sometimes live in seconds more than we could in a  
thousand of years,  
And before I could guess her meaning she had thrown  
herself on my face,  
And spread her leather jacket, which her warm hands held  
in place;  
I felt her breath in my nostrils and her fingertips in my hair,  
And through the roar of the burning grass I fancied I heard  
a prayer.

[Pg 98]

'Twas but for a moment; the flames were gone; unharmed  
they had passed me by;  
God knows why the useless are spared to live while the  
faithful are called to die,  
But the form that had sheltered me shivered, and seemed to  
shivel away,  
And when I had raised it clear of my face I looked into  
lifeless clay. . . .  
And darkness fell, and the world was black, and the last of  
my reason fled,  
And when I came to myself again I was back at the ranch, in  
bed.

That was back in the Eighties, and still I am living here;  
I built this shanty on the spot; her grave is lying near;  
And when at nights my nostrils sense the smoke-smell in the  
air  
I seem to feel her form again, and hear again her prayer;  
And then the darkness settles down and wild night-creatures  
cry,  
But stars come out in heaven and there's comfort in the sky.

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[Pg 99]

## WHO OWNS THE LAND?

Who owns the land?

The Duke replied,  
"I own the land. My fathers died  
In winning it from foreign hands,  
They paid in red blood for their lands;  
Their swarthy *villeins* bit the dust  
In founding the Landowners' Trust;  
And many generations dead  
Substantiate what I have said,  
The land belongs to us because  
We've had the making of the laws."

Who owns the land?

The Common Man  
Said, "Government adopts a plan  
By which the land is held in fee  
For common folks, like you an' me.  
The man who'd alter it's a crank;  
I got the transfer—in the bank—  
I've little time to think about  
These theories silly fellows shout,  
I have to work to beat the band  
To pay the mortgage on the land."

Who owns the land?

The [Statesman](#) said,  
"The land supplies our daily bread,  
And raises wheat, and corn, and oats,  
And simple husbandmen—and votes—  
The land was won at awful cost  
And many soldiers' lives were lost.  
Too bad! They're mostly silly boys  
Who go to battle for the noise.  
Here's a quotation I admire:

[Pg 100]

'The people's voice is God's desire,'  
And as I rule by right divine,  
I half suspect the land is mine."

Who owns the land?

The Farmer said,  
"What puts that question in yer head?  
I own it. Tuk a homestead here  
An' lived on it fer twenty year;  
I bet a new ten dollar bill  
That I could hold it down until  
I got the patent, an' I won;  
The land is mine, as sure's a gun.  
When city blokes come here to shoot,  
You bet, they get the icy boot!  
But 't made me mighty mad when that  
Danged railway come across the flat  
An' cut my homestead plumb in two,  
But there I wuz—what could I do?  
But jest set down, resigned to fate,  
Fer fear that they'd expropriate."

[Pg 101]

Who owns the land?

The Speculator  
Said, "Land is just an incubator  
In which to let your dollars hatch  
And, some fine morning—sell the batch."

Who owns the land?

The Indian Chief  
Said, "Ugh, the white man mucha thief!  
He steal my lan' because he's strong  
(By gar, it take him pretty long),  
He steal my lan', an' call it law,  
He turn me out, me an' my squaw;  
He let us die, because we not  
Like him, can live in one same spot;  
He talk so much of civilize—  
He's civil—sometimes—an' he lies!"

Who owns the land?

The Over-Rich  
Said, "All these people claim to, which  
Is satisfactory to me,  
So long as they cannot agree.  
Let them arrange it as they will  
As long as some one pays the bill.  
The present plan is, surely, fine;  
*The interest, at least, is mine.*"

[Pg 102]

Who owns the land?

In meek surprise  
The child said, "Like the air, and skies,  
And running water, flowers, and birds,  
And lullabies, and gentle words,  
And rosy sunsets, clouds, and storms,  
And God revealed in all His forms—  
'Tis plain the land's the right of birth  
Of every creature on the earth:  
*No man can make a grain of sand;  
How can he say he owns the land?"*

## A RACE FOR LIFE

(As related for the benefit of the New Arrival.)

YES, stranger, I hev trailed the West  
 Since I wuz a kid on a bob-tailed nag,  
 I hev known the old land at its best,  
 An' packed most ev'ry kind of jag;  
 I hev rode fer life frum a prairie fire,  
 An' tramped fer life through a snow blockade;  
 I hev crumpled "bad men" by the quire,  
 But only once hev I been afraid.

I hev lain alone while the red-men crep'  
 Aroun' me in their fightin'-paint;  
 I have soothed the widow while she wep'  
 Because I'd made her man a saint;  
 I hev lassooed lobsters frum the East,  
 Till ev'ry j'int in their system shook,  
 An' I'd never run frum man or beast  
 Until I run frum a chinook.

The chinook had his lair in Crow's Nest Pass,  
 An' he foraged aroun' the Porcupine Hills,  
 But he'd loafed so long that the ranchin' grass  
 Had a wool-white cover frum the chills;  
 An' me, like a chap that wuz not afraid  
 Of anything with hide an' hair,  
 Went out in a sleigh to the hills an' stayed  
 Till the old chinook might find me there.

[Pg 104]

At last, when I thought I had tempted fate  
 Enough fer a man with a past like mine,  
 I hitched the bronks an' struck a gait  
 Along the slopes of the Porcupine;  
 An' the day wuz as cold as the Polar Sea,  
 With a nip as keen as a she-wolf fang;  
 But frost wuz just like food to me,  
 An' boldly over the fields I sang:

*"I am the man frum the Hole in the Hills,  
 Where the Great G. Whiliken capers 'round;  
 I am the gent that pays the bills  
 When they plant a greenhorn in the ground;  
 I am the Finish of folks that think  
 They can run a bluff on the prairie-bred,  
 Fer I give their vitals a fatal kink  
 When I open up with a shower of lead."*

An' the cold bit into my nose an' chin,  
 An' drilled itself to the marrow-bone;  
 My face wuz drawn in a frozen grin,  
 An' my fingers rattled like lumps of stone;  
 But my heart wuz as brave as an outlaw stag,  
 An' I laughed though the frost cut like a knife;  
 Till sudden I felt the hind bob drag,  
 An' I [knew](#) I wuz in fer a race fer life.

[Pg 105]

Out from his lair the sly chinook  
 Had hunted me with his fatal breath;  
 I dared not turn aroun' to look,  
 Fer to strand on the hillside there wuz death;

The hot wind sizzled along my back,  
An' the sweat stood out on my shoulder-blade,  
So I yelled at the team through the frozen crack  
The roll of the tongue in my mouth had made—

"Get out o' here; by the Polar Star,  
The fiend of the South is on your heels!"  
An' I felt the old sleigh cringe an' jar,  
An' fer once I prayed—fer a pair o' wheels;  
But the sleigh stood still as the hind bob stuck  
In mud that rolled to the bolster-rail;  
So I slipped the tongue an' cursed my luck  
As I straddled a bronk an' hit the trail.

Well, we beat it out by half a neck,  
But the broncho's tail was scorched a sight,  
An' I wuz a blistered, parboiled wreck,  
An' nearly dead o' heat an' fright;  
An' I squatted down in a shady spot  
An' fanned myself with a wisp o' hay,  
An' the boys on the lower ranches thought  
They heard a voice in the chinook say:

*"I am the dope that was made to feed,  
To fresh down-Easters just come out;  
They'll swallow it all in their greenhorn greed,  
An' send it home, beyond a doubt;  
I am the caricature an' bluff  
That is part of the play of the Western men"—*  
What's that? You say you've had enough?  
Well, pass it on to your neighbor, then.

[Pg 106]

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### TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE

The following changes were made:

- Page 15: An → [An'](#)  
Page 16: an → [an'](#)  
Page 20: moring → [morning](#)  
Page 52: somtimes → [sometimes](#)  
Page 70: Lorship → [Lordship](#) and Lorship → [Lordship](#)  
Page 87: wised → [wished](#)  
Page 92: and they were the *the* ones to pay.  
→ and they were [the](#) ones to pay.  
Page 94: prarie → [prairie](#)  
Page 100: Stateman → [Statesman](#)  
Page 105: kew → [knew](#)

There were 3 stanzas of 12 lines in the midst of poems where the rest of the stanzas are 6 lines. They have been split into 6 line stanzas. The stanzas are:

- Page 35: [The room was warm and cosy, and the light was soft and low.](#)  
Page 93: [So you never heard how I lost my leg and hobble now on a crutch?](#)  
Page 96: [How long I lay I could never tell, for the hours were days to me.](#)

Minor variations in spelling and punctuation have been

preserved.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SONGS OF THE PRAIRIE  
\*\*\*

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