

BECKONING TRAILS

BY

B. L. Bruce



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B. L. BRUCE

Author of *From Day to Day*



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DEDICATION

To David Bruce Moorehead, our first grandchild,
this book is dedicated with love and gratitude.

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P R E F A C E

Poets stand accused of writing stuff and nonsense — and no wonder. Folk say that they seek to escape the present by letting their imagination riot in fanciful figmentation. Yet, wiser tongues than ours have long since told us that nothing is insignificant or mean, and only lack of comprehension closes our eyes to the marvels about us. And who shall draw the line between reality and what we loosely term unreality?

True it is that there is a world within the world we live in, and each one is a poet who ventures across the bounds of this other world and seeks to clothe the commonplace with new found charm, unveil the haunts of beauty, and find a language within our grasp that shall lend new meanings to a trail we long have trod but little known.

Bruce L. Birmingham

BECKONING TRAILS

We live within well loved familiar walls
And follow chosen ways we long have known,
But oftentimes insistently there calls

A beckoning trail departing from our own.
New faces hold a promise of new friends,
Strange names suggest environs unexplored,
Each dawn unfolds a vista that extends
A challenge to the wings that never soared.

We need the sustenance of settled things
But grow by grace of highways yet untried,
And seeking cloistered byways often brings
Rare wonders in a world amazing wide.
For feet grown weary of the beaten way
The beckoning trail betokens a new day.



THE FIRST GRANDCHILD

O, who could be prouder
Than brand new grandparents,
Tho assuming the credit
Is a myth of transparence.
All their clucking and cooing
Fail to win the good graces
Of a wee one unblinking,
Who yawns in their faces.
"I do not recall
Having met you before,"
His manner says plainly,
"Pray, don't be a bore."

ONE SUMMER DAY

Love came knocking at my door,
And when I opened wide
A world known but in dreams before,
Entered to abide.
Straight thru the gateway of my heart
You skipped one summer day,
So like your golden counterpart,
A sunbeam, out to play.

Within an ofttimes lonely breast
You kindled warmth anew
And Loveliness became my guest
Because she dwelt with you.
Something to my life you lent
That gave all things new worth,
And your dear love wrought sweet content
And brighter joy on earth.

POET'S WIFE TELLS ALL

It chanced that I married a poet,
Tho I never had dreamed of the day,
When I'd travel thru life on the impulse
Of Pegasus hitched to a shay.
As a wife one finds out that a poet
Reckons not with the passing of time,
When he ought to be stoking the furnace
He's apt to be fiddling with rhyme.

When the man of the house is a poet,
You never can be sure when you'll eat,
Because you must first pry him loose from
His puttering with metrical feet.
He makes cryptic notes without meaning,
And hops up in the night to add more,
So girls, if one woos you with verses,
Here's a hint of the future in store.

PUMPKINSHELL APARTMENT

In olden days when flats were few,
One Peter Pumpkineater too,
Having just acquired a brand new bride
Whom he was loath to park outside,
Went forth apartment hunting bound
And a pumpkin shell was all he found.

Still, Peter wavered not one whit,
Quoth he, "Sweet Punkins, this is it:
'Twill house us cozily, withal,
The while our family is small."
He moved her in and ceased to gripe,
(She must have been the folding type.)

THE SOLDIER RETURNS

Home again! The front gate squeaking still,
Sweet music to the one who's had his fill
Of battle din. The yard seems strangely small
To eyes that have been wont to range o'er all
The reaches of the sky and distant shore.
All is the same yet packed with something more
Of beauty never seen before. The tree
Where hung the swing in boyhood days carefree,
Nods welcome with its boughs. Mom's pansy plot,
In all this little scene the brightest spot,
Remains her special pride. And 'round it all
The picket fence still guards this kingdom small.
Home again! Stepping with eager tread
Where lonely thoughts in dreams have often led.
Back to the haven he has helped secure
Where fairest hopes may flower evermore.

TWO PHOTOS

In a humble home that I know so well,
Two photos stand and their stories tell.
There's a youthful smile on a soldier's face
And a nurse wears her white with becoming grace.
A brother and sister who had been nowhere
Save the nearest big town or the county fair,
But this slip of a lad has crossed Europe's span
And amazed us by landing in far Japan,
While the shy little nurse with her healing art
Has sailed two oceans to do her part.
Just a boy and a girl from a farmhouse home
Who never had known what it meant to roam;
But thousands of girls like brave Mary Ann
Have succored the suffering as they only can,
And millions like Pat, the once care free kid,
Have halted a world in its downward skid.

THE SEED CATALOG

The winter's dominion is banished,
In spite of the snow or the hail,
When we answer the ring of the postman
And the garden book comes in the mail.
The sky may be dull and foreboding
And barren the far frozen land,
But the spell of Boreas is broken
When the seed catalog comes to hand.

How gorgeous the tints it discloses,
On pages that teem with delight!
How gay are our favorite posies,
So welcome again to our sight!
A preview of springtime enchantment
That never has been known to fail
Is given us, when in the winter,
The garden book comes in the mail.

MOMENTUM

No doubt you've often noticed that
Momentum helps a lot
When the going's rather difficult
And you're on a so-called spot.
That little extra speed obtained
By gravity's sure aid
Is a wonderful advantage when
You mount the upward grade.

And so the habits once acquired
Of optimistic cheer,
And industry and faith uplift
When trying times are here.
And should life's weather signals change
From fair to storm instead,
Momentum gained in other days
Will help us forge ahead.

A MILLION DOLLARS

"If I had a million dollars
I'd do a world of good,"
We may have often said it
But I wonder if we would.
Perchance it's wishful thinking
With a bit of tempting bait
That we hope will coax a handout
From a stern exacting fate.

He who seeks to serve his fellows
Needn't wait for fortune's call,
For the things for which hearts hunger
Are not for sale at all;
And the milk of human kindness
Has a worth beyond compare —
Perhaps our hands hold more of wealth
Than we have been aware.

THE CALL TO ARMS

The housewife is a soul serene,
At least until she spies,
A moth miller in practice flight
Before her startled eyes.

Then like a flash she makes a dash
To smite the flitting foe,
Now here, now there, she flails the air,
While darting to and fro.

It only takes one tiny moth
With predatory notion
To turn our home into a state
Of turbulent commotion.

FRIENDLY PEOPLE

There are those whose wit and wisdom
It is a treat to hear,
We enjoy the well-turned wisecracks
That fall upon the ear.
We listen to the learned
Pay homage where it's due
And profit from the talent
And genius of the few.
But there's no mental garnish
That leaves so warm a glow
As meeting friendly people
Whom we are glad to know.
For like the summer showers
That freshen life anew
They pass and leave behind them
A brighter day in view.
Transient is the impulse
That fleeting thoughts impart,
But indelible the impress
Of love upon the heart.

NEWS IS WHERE YOU FIND IT

"World at the End of Its Tether,"

Headlines a learned sage,
I thought of a nice roof to leap from
And turned to another page.

"New Plaid Skirts Are Beautiful,"

Smote my eye with a note of cheer,
So I dusted my glasses off straightway
And decided to stick around here,

FATHER TAKES A BOW

Now comes the annual day of days
When father reaps his meed of praise;
Likewise a merited citation
From moms and kids thruout the nation,
For fine performance all the year
In behalf of those he holds most dear.
A lot depends on dad, you know,
For youthful appetites will grow,
And clothes wear out, and nothing stays
The same as in the yesterdays.
Dad's wisdom also must enfold
The problems of the young and old.
There's Junior's home work, and the choice
Of daughter's dates requires his voice.
When stumped on one thing or another,
Pop says, "I'm busy, ask your mother";
But on the whole we all agree
Dad carries on amazingly.

THE MODERN MAUD

'Twas long ago that I read the tale
Of how upon a summer's day,
Maud Muller, rural glamour girl,
Raked the meadow sweet with hay.
And ever since, in haying time,
I've scanned the fields with watchful eye
Hoping to see 'neath some torn brim
Another Maud, demure and shy.
But the modern Miss is not abashed,
Clad in her overalls of blue,
To her simple beauty and rustic health
She adds a touch of lipstick too;
And I rather think if the judge had met
Today's fair maid out making hay,
Instead of saying a sad goodbye,
He'd have wangled a date for another day.

NEW GIRL IN TOWN

How many a time in the old home town
Sad upsets were sure to occur,
When an out of town girl happened in for a while
And set boyish hearts all astir.
Susceptible swains proved a prey to the spell
Of wiles the local gals lacked.
And when she gave forth with her innocent eyes
What a punch in those peepers she packed!
For dates of all kinds she was daily besieged
By admirers almost without end,
But among frigid ranks of the maidens bereft,
She scouted in vain for a friend.
And after she left it took Cupid himself
Many months to get things settled down,
And tender romances restored as they were
Before the new girl came to town.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

When Valentine's gay season comes,
The time when lovers oft reveal
Some hint of tender sentiments
Their palpitating bosoms feel;
It's very heartening to see
That cupid is still in command,
And in a topsy-turvy world
He's busy at the same old stand.
With master skill he plies his craft
Of joining hearts together,
For wars may come and wars may go,
But love goes on forever.
It's very evident to all
That he's a real go-getter,
When interviewed he said (I quote)
"Business was never better."

GOLDEN BARTER

More vital than the call of man's physique
For that which multiplies his strength anew,
Is commerce of the heart, strangely unique,
In the engaging warmth of friendship true.
Within the confidence of those we trust
Is found a happy sustenance that brings
A buoyant lightness to this frame of dust
And lends the downcast spirit, sprightly wings.

In blithe companionship there lies a charm,
And in the friendly circle, blessed cheer
That, like a fortress, shelters us from harm
And shields from barbs that would assail us here.
None is sufficient unto self alone,
Yet stores some quality he may impart,
Which golden barter of the best we own
Avails to still the longing of the heart.

AROUND THE CORNER

"Expect the unexpected,"
So folks often say,
There's tonic in the challenge
That waits beside the way.

No day is like another;
Something of surprise,
Often on our journey
Greeted our eager eyes.

Love of high adventure
In our nature sown
Lends to each day's dawning
The lure of the unknown.

Fast we hold things proven,
Precious they abide,
While around the corner
Beckons the untried.

THE OLD FENCE

From a leaf out of boyhood bright memories remain
Of a rambling rail fence that borders a lane
Whose well beaten paths led to pastures below,
Whence the cattle so placidly passed to and fro.
Along the old rails, with rollicking zest,
The chipmunks played tag; and many a nest
Did the birds hide away in some sheltering space
In the roomy rail fence and its friendly embrace.
There, too, our old biddy sometimes stole away
And hatched out a brood in the tall growing hay.
In corners sequestered, hid close to the ground,
The shy, peeping violets in springtime were found.
Here, safely harbored, the blackberries grew,
And gay in their greeting, were wild daisies too.
Rail fences have passed, but their charm lives again
When, in memory, I walk down an old winding lane.

THE CORNER HOUSE

It's a trim little place and in order,
With an aspect of thrift and good cheer,
From the hedgerow that bounds the front border
To the alley that runs in the rear.
There are gay window boxes appealing,
Starchy curtains impart a prim air,
There's a fence newly painted, revealing
The pride of the folks dwelling there.
The yard is allotted in spaces,
The lawn has been clipped with due care,
And the flowers that bloom in spare places
Are doing their best to look fair.
I'm reminded in passing each morning,
By the green spread of well tended loam,
Of that quest of the heart, all adorning,
That changes a house to a home.

PATRIOTS OF THE PAST

With profit we may turn our eyes again
To former days when strong courageous men,
Upon this stark and hostile shore unfurled
The ensign designate of a freeman's world.
We are debtors all to those of stern intent
Who blazed the pathways of a continent;
And to wise leaders, who with vision clear,
And great ideals and aspirations dear,
Kept the full promise of this land in view
And laid in law its framework deep and true.
So well they wrought that in this latter day,
Men in martial ranks unfaltering lay
Their lives upon the altar of our land
To keep it safe from the despoiler's hand.
The spirit of the patriots gone before
Still marches on to make our world secure.

PANHANDLERS

When busy with my spading,
From somewhere unforeseen,
Fat robins come parading
With pert and saucy mien.

These kibitzers right snooty
Scan every lump of soil,
While standing by for booty
Garnered from my toil.

Gay loafers they, who clearly
See all my work in terms
Of sweat, expended merely
To turn up tasty worms.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

We honor, as the years their cycles run,
With veneration a beloved son
Of Illinois; and pause to read again
The messages he brought to troubled men.
We marvel that the simple words we know
Fell from his lips with an immortal glow,
High up on history's scroll to be emplaced,
Never, while time shall run, to be erased.
In his seamed face how plainly do we read
His kinship with humanity's deep need.
Each furrow tells of knowledge dearly bought
That fitted him to lead in seasons fraught
With war's alarm. Though chosen chief to be,
In spirit there was none humbler than he.
Devoid of self, with an unswerving zeal
He gave himself unto his country's weal.
The bitter hatreds born of civil strife
Found no echo in his heart. Such was his life
That there was room for friend and enemy
Within the mantle of his charity.
Today we look to Lincoln for we know
We shall find guidance in the way we go.

EASTER FRILLS

The Easter skies are smiling,
Why shouldn't they forsooth?
For mother's bright new bonnet
With Johnny-jump-ups on it,
Just smacks you in the eye
and that's the truth.

The ladies look beguiling,
The daughters are a dream,
And Pop with cane and spats
And the gayest of cravats
Upholds the splendor of
the family scheme.

THE NEW ARRIVAL

At the budding age of three short months
With technique all unplanned
He counts his public in the hearts
Ensnared on every hand.

Bright eyes of blue he turns on you,
With an unconscious guile,
And dimples deep that perforate
A broad and beaming smile.

He makes with signs and cooing sounds
That voice his slight demands,
And clutches all your heartstrings fast
Within his tiny hands.

THE UNHURRIED LADY

Dame Nature never hurries like
We fussy humans do.
Serene she moves about each task
That she may have in view.
She has a family to feed,
The human race, no less,
But meals are generally on time,
It's wondrous, I confess.
She sweeps the cobwebs from the sky
That naught may hide it's hue
And tints each tiny blade of grass,
A trying task to do.
She calmly shifts the wind and tide,
With gems adorns the snow,
While mortals bent on many things
Shuttle to and fro.
Perhaps we ought to take a leaf
From Nature's book sublime,
And learn the quiet sanction and
The seasoning of time.

CLEAN-UP TIME

When the ice and snow have vanished,
Winter's clinging coat of grime
Is the cue that should remind us
Of the annual clean-up time.
Mother Nature has a mighty
Cosmic cleaning job to do,
First, she touches up the heavens
With a touch of springtime blue,
Then to hide the faded meadows
Weaves a carpet fresh and clean,
And about the forest branches
Drapes a garb of leafy green.
Soon the scent of newness hovers
Over hill, and field, and sward,
Then it's up to man, the laggard,
To slick up the old home yard.

MISS APRIL

Now April comes with beckoning hands,
And how enchanting her commands!
From wintry chill she leads the way
To where the dancing sunbeams play
About our path, and in each ear
She whispers of bright beauty near.
Her wistful charms dismiss our fears
With smiles that gleam thru gusty tears.

For her the redbirds every spring
Their most exulting arias sing,
And bluebells peeping thru the mold
Their fragile loveliness unfold,
While field and wood together bring
Their lavish votive offering.
Dear April, bringer of fair days,
We love your bright bewitching ways!

LEND-LEASE VACATIONS

The folks from the city are now outward bound,
Fleeing from crowds and a jumble of sound;
Led by a dream of an oft pictured scene
Where the skies are flung wide and the fields flounced
with green.

And the folks from the country are flocking to town
Where there's fun to be had that will cure every frown;
Gay beaches and shows, and the big leaguers play —
O, to have a vacation, you must get away.

VACATION POSTCARDS

The greenest grass that ever grew,
The landscape of most gorgeous hue,
The fish of most gigantic girth
On this or any other earth,
The lake whose depths are deepest blue,
Were on the cards that came from you.

THE ABUNDANT LIFE

The benefits that prove of truest worth
Of all the things we hold upon this earth,
Are not on us conferred. And we have learned,
That only is our own which we have earned
Thru trying toil, and it may be thru tears,
And woven into life thru passing years.
How often in our zeal would we bestow
The wealth of every blessing that we know
On those we love the best; and thus deprive
Them of a fruitful goal for which to strive.
Bright dreams, fair purposes, and plans comprise
A capital investment wherein lies
A destiny enriched with vastly more
Than any recompense in earthly store.
To seek the gems in life's exhaustless mine
Is man's high privilege and right divine.

RETURNING TRAVELERS

The songbirds of our summers
Bring greetings blithe and gay;
From southern haunts these bummers
Are checking in each day.
No swanky luggage boasting,
They do not tote a thing,
As free their flight as coasting
With fancy on the wing.
They make no reservation,
Nor plan a month before,
But journey with elation
A thousand miles or more.
Flat hunting does not faze them
Nor are they ever cowed
By signs which would amaze them,
"No Children are allowed."
Proud robin, global minded,
With scorn looks down his beak
At stupid humans blinded
Who winter where it's bleak.

SHADES OF SUMMER

Vacationists proudly display
Their varied shades of tan each day,
From scintillating red in range
To burnished brown, it's truly strange
That epidermis once so fair
And pampered with the choicest care,
Should now become just so much hide
Which Sol's all sizzling rays have fried.
Each day I miss yet more and more
The velvet skin our darlings wore.
O, come you back soft cuticle
Unblistered and more beautiful.

THE ANNUAL PICNIC

It is a day we welcome when
The annual picnic beckons,
And eagerly we sally forth
Forgetting fate that reckons.
Indoor restraints have worn us down,
We're itching for an outing
Where there's no limit to a lark
Nor any ban on shouting.

So casting caution to the winds
We prance, and play, and frolic,
Uncorking impulse pent throughout
Months drab and melancholic;
But comes the day of reckoning
When to our painful sorrow
We find an ache in every joint
Upon the dread tomorrow.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

A place in my heart there will be always
For the schoolmaster of my early days.
For him no drudgery seemed to dwell
In his chosen work. He loved it well,
And his zeal for knowledge, a cheerful flame,
Made the quest for learning so like a game
Where all that one found was his to keep
And fortunes there were for all to reap.
There, abetted by humor, the printed page,
Prosy with sayings of poet and sage,
Swung wide like a window thru which to view
An amazing world that seemed like new.
From the schoolhouse beside a familiar hill
The master has gone, but remaining still
Is the memory green in each grateful heart
That was coached by one who loved his art.

AUTUMN DAYS

At this rare season of the year
We sing fair autumn's praise,
A golden interlude between
Summer and winter days.
The winding trails of woodland
With leaves are carpeted,
And squirrels scamper by with nuts
For winter days ahead.

The glory of the sunset seems
To linger with us still,
In the flame that lights the maple
And the sumac on the hill.
The vines and oaks are gaily splashed
With vivid crimson hues —
What joy to loiter here within
The forest avenues!

From signal fires as in the past
The smoke is curling high,
And the distant purple haze hangs low
To rim the azure sky.
It is a season fraught with charm
And made for mellow moods
When beauty finds a thousand tongues
In sky and field and woods.

GORGEOUS GOOD-BYS

The winsome pinks, entrancing still,
And marigolds their beauty spill,
And last of all, ere winter comes,
Our leisurely chrysanthemums,
With one gay fling defy their doom
By bravely bursting into bloom.

THE WHISPERING PINES

Like sentinels the pensive pines serene
Keep watch before the woodland cabin door;
Their stately images in vivid green
Are mirrored in the lake that laves the shore.

Something they breathe of quietness and peace,
Of silent strength, and beauty in repose,
That calms the restive heart and bids to cease
The strife of tongues and each ill wind that blows.

They hush the tempo of our hurried pace
As troubled waves are stilled before the dawn
By soothing hand that smooths the lake's fair face,
And lo! the hills and hollows all are gone.

THE FIREPLACE

When summer days have gone and wintry chill
Invades the evening twilight, there is still
A compensating gladness we may know
Within the circle of the hearthside glow.
With familiar charm the fireplace plays host
To cherished friends and those we love the most.
Its crackling fuel, unstinted cheer extends
That gently thaws our natures thru, and lends
To low spun words its punctuation clear
In notes staccato for each listening ear.
The little tongues of flame in sportive play
Vie at tossing sparks aloft in play.
Then comes a time when embers burning low,
Bright essence of all happiness we know,
Revive dear memories of days now gone
And rouse the dreams of joys about to dawn.

THE LUCKY EAR

Time was when all our corn was shucked
By hand, and thru the day,
Plump ears against the bang-board chucked
Rang out their roundelay.
But now steel pickers move apace
And gather row on row,
And harvest acres of broad space,
Yet there are those who know
That one sweet idyl has been lost
Since husking bees no more
Invite, and cold machines have cost
The never failing lure
Of seeking one gay thrill of bliss
In the ear of red, whose hue
Matched willing lips from which a kiss
Was but the finder's due.

NAIVETE

From children's eager eyes peep forth
A fresh, unspoiled delight,
As passing days unfold for them
A panorama bright.

Like bees they sip the honey from
Each bloom beside the trail;
They love the silver tinted clouds
And the tuft of puppy's tail.

Far wiser than their elders, who
Beset by boding fears,
In this same world a harvest reap
Of trouble and of tears.

O, for a child's untutored faith
That finds joy everywhere
And knows that, tho the night be dark,
The morning will be fair.

WINTER ROBES

Are these the hills so lately bleak and bare
Whose summits wear new robes so softly bright
Of fleece, from cloudland shorn now resting there,
That silently descended in the night?

Is this the world on which we closed our eyes,
Of somber mien, bereft of beauty fair,
And woke to find a seeming paradise
Of quiet loveliness awaiting there?

Gaunt ugliness has fled and given place
To diamonds that scatter gleaming spray,
And upthrust roofs bear crowns of hoary grace
With eaves of icy pendants sparkling gay.

THE ALMANAC

The illuminating almanac
Is now at hand, and lo,
From phases of the moon it gleans
Quite all one needs to know.
When one should have his whiskers trimmed,
Which day to dry the clothes,
When love's sweet quest will prosper best,
And just when to propose.

When baby should be weaned it tells,
And when to set a hen;
Or pull the weeds, or plant your seeds,
And paint your house again.
And those who would be beautiful,
Or blessed with talents rare,
Should use due care in being born
When all the signs are fair.

CHRISTMAS PREVIEW

We shall be losers if we swing not wide
The portals of the heart to Yuletide's glow,
And let the golden cheer of Christmastide
Illumine all the path in which we go.
For when we hear the strains of Holy Night,
And from a window shines a gleaming star;
When eager children listen with delight
To tales of wise men traveling from afar;
Upon our sight a curtain seems to rise,
And on this earthly stage we see mankind
In all his nobler roles. Before us lies
A kindly world to which we had been blind,
A preview of good will that we may know
Of which the angels sang so long ago.

THE NEW YEAR

The New Year dawns, a sea aglow,
With promise of the day
And on its crest we launch our craft,
Hoist anchor and away.

And who that loves the sea's allure,
Would in the harbor bide,
When destiny is on the deep
And with the wind and tide.

For like the voyagers of old,
Who sought an unknown shore;
New lands await, whereon our feet
Have never trod before.

Explorers we who seek fair gifts
On each new day we live;
And there is much to do and dare,
And Life has much to give.

SOWING BESIDE ALL WATERS

"In the morning sow thy seed,
In the evening withhold not thy hand."
Go forth while the dew still glistens,
At dusk in the twilight stand.
For the sun and the showers will nurture
The seed you entrust to the earth,
And some will repay with fragrance
And some will bear grain of true worth.
Each bears something of promise,
Tho to us is not given to know,
Which shall fall short of its mission
And which to fruition shall grow.
Sow thoughts aflame with bright courage,
Words that are kind, row on row,
For there is power unreckoned
At work in the seed that you sow.
Sowing beside all waters
In fields all fallow and bare,
Trusting the Lord of the harvest
That beauty shall blossom there.

TABBY'S TRACKS

Imprinted in the concrete walk,
When it was freshly laid,
Our kitten's footprints are as plain
As when they first were made.
Quite unconcerned, she left behind
A trail for all to view,
A tiny mold that stands while all
Our world is cast anew.
Beneath the tread of passing feet
And beat of driving rain,
Tho men and empires round us fall,
Still, Tabby's tracks remain.

EASTER PETITION

May timely showers, whose touch adorns the earth,
Refresh as well each overburdened heart,
And may each dawn that brings a day's new birth,
To jaded minds its joyous lilt impart.
May we, like streams, be loosed from winter's thrall,
And sense the rhythm of the dancing rills;
Now, may we feel the pulse that moves thru all
Our world, and clothes with green the distant hills.
May soothing skies their soft serenity instill,
As mothers hush a fretful child to sleep;
And let us drink at beauty's fount, until
Something of life newborn is ours to keep.
So shall a strife torn world be healed again
And know the joy of peace that follows pain.

LENTEN THOUGHT

I cannot fathom faith nor yet make plain
Its processes, or demonstrate why we
Who cannot its profundity explain,
Should cling to that we cannot feel or see.

I only know that trust in man and God
And in the certain triumph of the true,
Keeps hope aglow, and is the fertile sod
That nurtures human nobleness anew.

When days are dark we follow faith's faint gleam
And find a guidance surer still than sight,
Its substance all unseen clothes each fair dream,
And links our lack with love's unfailing might.



A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

With thoughtful hearts we dedicate this day
To those brave boys of ours who went their way,
And will not come again. It seems not long
Since on their lips we heard gay bits of song
And boyish jest, while in a lightsome mood
They sipped youth's brimming cup and found it good.
Then war's dark shadow fell, and one by one
They slipped away. And now their task is done.
So soon it has been theirs to meet the test
That took their all. Untroubled is their rest,

On native soil or on some far off shore
Where they no more shall hear the cannon's roar.
With all the zest learned in each boyhood game
They played their part in war without acclaim.
The blessings we esteem beyond all price
Are saved for us by their great sacrifice.
On memory's wall the likenesses are hung
Of laughing lads now and forever young.

THE TOUCH OF TIME

The creeping vine and spreading sward have tried

To heal the ugly scars that war has made
In hill and fertile vale. And side by side
The wild flowers gather there to lend their aid.
So too, does time, the wounds of grief allay.

With soothing touch she stays our mounting tears,
And the grievous breaches of the heart today

Become the memories loved in after years.
Time tempers judgment oftentimes, and where

We saw too much to blame, it now reveals
The thought benign and humble genius rare,
That from our eyes proximity conceals.

GENTLE WARRIORS

In shimmering fields by the wayside

Are the undulant legions of grain,
Bending in rhythmical cadence
To the will of the wind and the rain.

Stretching afar in formation
Stand the ranks of the succulent corn,
Thrusting slim shoots ever skyward,
Green in the glistening morn.

Fighting for man against famine,

Enemy now, as of old,
Each spear of grass our defender,
Sheathing its roots in the mold.

The sun and the loam are our allies,
The showers and quickening dew,
Boundless the aid which they bring us
Daily the whole year thru.

SOLDIERS OF PEACE

Remote from the scene of the conflict,
Far from the cannons' dull roar,
Soldiers are fighting a battle
Valiantly, just as before.
There is no fanfare of glory
For him on whose war stricken eyes
The light of a world bathed in beauty
Never again shall arise.
Sightless they are, but unbeaten,
Facing ahead as those would,
Who rally youth's buoyant spirit
And ask but a chance to make good.
Blazing new paths of endeavor
On a strangely familiar old earth;
High have they paid to insure us
Things of an infinite worth.
Learning new skills with rare patience,
Finding in work sure release,
Winning the conflict with darkness —
These are the soldiers of peace.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT

More cheerful even than the sun's fair light
Are stars that bravely gleam amid the night,
And welcome to the sailor's anxious eye
The beacon rays that mark the harbor nigh.
With unfeigned joy, upon some far off strand,
We greet a well known friend from our own land.

As flowers all content daily to bloom
In sordid scenes to cleanse the air from gloom
And gently teach that ugliness is wrong,
So men for love of truth have struggled long;
Led on by questing faith's unerring sight
For God still giveth songs in every night.

THE GREATEST OF THESE

Can it be that love, in this world of strife,
Is still the greatest of things in life?

O, the winds of ill blow strong each day
And in our affairs wield their hateful sway.
Yet under the surface, the Father's will,
Silent, unsung, is working still;
For love issues forth from God's own great heart
And is of the inner kingdom a part.

It floods not the world like the break of day,
But from heart to heart finds its own pathway.

And none is so lowly but he may share
As part of the channel this grace to bear.
Its might is gentle, yet it alone
Can change into flesh the heart of stone.
Naught else offers hope for the ills of this day,
Love only can cure, for this is God's way.

THE PROMISE OF THE IMPERFECT

We live in a world imperfect,
Where creatures strive for gain,
And in the struggle to be first
Lies misery and pain.
But ever thru the dimness
That human blindness breeds
There glows the shining promise
Of men's heroic deeds.

And in the time of testing
The folk we thought we knew
Display a new found fibre
Enduring, fine, and true;
For in each mortal complex,
Oft hid by earthly taint,
There is, awaiting summons,
The making of a saint.

THE HEART OF YOUTH

High are the hopes of youth, and they
View not the future with dismay;
Seeing with keener sight than he
Who finds the shape of things to be
In omens seeming ill. Eyes beam
In carefree faces all agleam
With budding plans and dreams. Faith's glow
Is strong in hearts that somehow know
With an unerring sense that clouds,
Whose overhanging outline shrouds
Our path, will pass; and brighter still
The dawn will steal across the hill
In days to come. How good to hear
The treble notes of voices clear
Dispelling gloom; for courage lives
In countless youthful hearts and gives
The lie to fear. Here is the stuff,
Buoyant and brave and strong enough
To brighten each dark day. Have done
With doubt that dims the noonday sun,
And catch the sparkling gleam of truth
That shines from out the heart of youth.

THE INNER HOUSE

It's not enough that I refrain
From words that wound and leave their sting,
If in the heart there shall remain
The stains of spite and bickering.

Each selfish impulse soils the clean
And tidy chambers of the mind.
To keep my inner house serene
The thoughts that dwell there must be kind.

THE ALCHEMY OF LOVE

As morning tints suffuse the sky
And turn its gray to gold,
So romance steals into the heart
Its wonders to unfold.
It touches up life's shabby face
And leaves no drabness there;
With deft and subtle artistry
Love makes the whole world fair.

Some impetus it adds within,
Some precious worth imparts
To common things. All heaven beams
Upon united hearts.
And happy meanings multiply
In joys together found
For in this bond each finds that love
Still makes the world go 'round.

UNSEEN ASSETS

Science unlocks for us in myriad ways
Discoveries that lighten toil, and bring
Sweet benefits that gild our passing days
And steal from many ills their dreaded sting.
But in the test tube we shall seek in vain
"The quality of mercy, not constrained,
Which droppeth from the heaven like gentle rain,"
Nor is by any formula explained.

Within the heart's true kingdom may we learn
How happiness on simple acts best thrives,
And love unselfed will still the brighter burn
Leaving its glow forever in our lives.
More wondrous than the striding march of mind
Is the blessed art of being kind.

WHEN THE WAR CAME TO TOWSER

My dog hadn't heard of the war on,
But was most acutely aware,
Thru the shrinkage of once relished portions
That the larder of dogdom was bare.

And when I explained a dog's duty,
He whimpered — it just was no use!
Tho the smartest of pups, still pretending
In this to be blankly obtuse.

He lacked all the stuff of a hero
Who freely gives all to the cause,
And with his most soulful entreaty
He poked at my knee with his paws.

He assumed not to know of the war on,
But with the most painstaking care
Took the pose of a much misused martyr
With his droopy, disconsolate air.

WAR CASUALTY

Mark the palsied, crumpled fender,
Of ye ancient motor car,
Now in place of former splendor,
Bearing many a battle scar.

With its bumpers all aquiver,
And its twisted, gaping grill,
Yet, the shaking, quaking flivver,
Valiantly rolls onward still.

Tho it rated special merit
In the days of "share the ride",
Rust and racket now declare it
Just a nuisance to abide.

WHEN MEAT WAS SCARCE

Not a vestige of veal
For my man's evening meal!
Not even a sliver
Of bacon or liver,
And my spirit is sad
For they're not to be had.
For one smell of fried chicken
I'd take a good lickin'!

In my heart there's an ache,
I'm short a short steak.
O, I'm just up a stump
Minus sirloin or rump!
How can I play host
Without a rib roast?
Nothing in sight but vegetable stews,
"Man Bites Steak" is REALLY news,
So I'm singing the "Butcher Shop Blues."

MOTHER GOOSE REVISED

This little pig went to market,
Too long he'd stayed away.
Thru weeks of meatless menus
We yearned for him each day.

So this little pig went to market,
And O, the welcome there!
Folks loved his plump appearance,
And appetizing air,

Not to mention hams and bacon,
And tender roasts and ribs,
Most savory benefactions
Provided by his nibs.

G. I. ROMANCE

Through trying times, undaunted love once more
Has shown the quality which can endure
And triumph over all. War burdened days
And months of separation are sure ways
To drive devotion's roots to deeper soil
And nurture tiny tendrils naught can foil,
Which weave their net about responsive hearts
And bind them with the gentlest of arts.

When love-lit eyes look into answering eyes,
Hearts leap at having found in mortal guise
Life's dearest gift. Some sweet assurance brews
Within, and with its faith the mind endues.
With insight true each feels that this bright gleam
Has placed within his hands a prize supreme,
And love will still avail all ills to slay
While down a broadening path it points the way.

"THE HEAVENS ARE TELLING"

Witnesses are not wanting,
On every side they stand,
Mute testimony flaunting
Of a kind Creator's hand.
That heart might not be lonely
He loosed the day's sweet light,
Unrivalled save by only
The witchery of night.

A Father, philanthropic,
With wonders vast and great,
And marvels microscopic,
Enriches man's estate.
Childlike we lag in learning
To prove the truer worth
Of gifts, whose use discerning
Brings heaven close to earth.

DIVIDENDS FROM DEEDS

"Cast thy bread upon the waters,"
Say not it is but in vain,
In some far off day, forgotten,
It shall come to you again.

Something of the best within you,
Given with no thought of gain,
Borne upon the day's broad current
May some weary heart sustain.

Smiles are merchandise eternal,
Friendly deeds shall bloom for aye,
"Cast thy bread upon the waters,"
It shall bless some future day.

ROOF GARDENS

Flowers on the roof top
In their narrow cell
Banish barren outlooks
By their magic spell.
Bound by brick and mortar,
Gardens set in stone,
By their presence amply
For ugliness atone.
Marigolds so gorgeous,
Poppies tall and fair,
Petunias in profusion,
Proudly flourish there.
Though the roaring traffic
Rolls its restless tide,
Hearts athirst for beauty
Will not be denied.
Flowers on the housetop
Clad in colors gay,
How your blossoms brighten
Each succeeding day!

THE COOKIE JAR

Our grandson is king in a
 little round world
With a cookie jar right
 in the middle,
And his fondness therefor,
 if the truth be unfurled,
Is not the least bit
 of a riddle.
For his grandpop and dad
 mildly curious had been
O'er the chanting of Hi! diddle, diddle,
But their earliest love
 was that kingdom wherein
Was a cookie jar right
 in the middle.
So our grandson considers
 as merely routine,
The tale of the cat and the fiddle,
But in his tiny world
 it's plain to be seen,
That his truest affection
 is constant and keen
For the cookie jar right
 in the middle.

WHY FANS GO BATTY

The home team's up, three men are on,
 List to those deafening roars —
The batter fans, a double play,
 And not a runner scores.
They're up again and two are down,
 Our hope begins to sag —
A hit, a walk, a double, and
 The game is in the bag.

REMOTE CONTROL

In the midst of a movie
With thrills that surpass,
Mom whispers "I wonder
If I turned off the gas."

Come sweet television,
With all seeing ray,
And those burning questions
Please settle, I pray.

And radar, quit fooling
With things on the moon
And turn the gas gadget
As ordered, and soon.

DAD'S COMPLAINT

I know not if this be the house
Called home since long ago,
Since daughter went away to school
The place has altered so.

All is so very circumspect,
There's nothing out of place;
No bobbie pins are strewn about,
Nor fixings for the face.

The telephone is strangely mute,
There are no calls for dates,
Nobody cops my sox and ties
Nor my miscues berates.

This house is too blamed orderly,
One seems a guest in it —
But she'll be back at Christmas time
And muss things up a bit.

THE WAYSIDE SPRING

Where the dusty trail dips steeply
And the rocks rise sharp and sheer,
The waters of the wayside spring
Are flowing cool and clear;
And on their crystal surface,
The rugged green clad brink
And a patch of sky are mirrored
For him who stoops to drink.

'Tis here the birds find haven
And timid creatures play,
While the spring's unceasing lullaby
Is heard thru all the day;
Unmeasured is its bounty,
There is no toll to pay,
Within this quiet niche the world
Seems banished far away.

And there is cool refreshing
Beside these mossy stones
Where the music of the waters
For weariness atones;
From here each thirsty trav'ler,
However brief his stay,
Some echo of the wayside spring
May carry on his way.

TULIPS ON PARADE

With cheeks full flushed, the tulips stand erect,
All splashed with hues that with the sunset vie,
And with sweet candor modestly collect
A breathless tribute from each passer-by.

DAYS THAT DELIGHT

The woodbine and the goldenrod are gay
And bear no hint of winter on the way.
A leafy army daily earthward bound
Comes parachuting gently to the ground.
From signal fires thin wraiths of smoke arise
Bearing an earthy incense to the skies.
Bright beauty walks in woodland ways, and where
She lingers, leaves bewitching traces there
In scarlet sumac, and in boughs aflame
With color that emblazons her fair name.
For lives that dwell too much in brick and stone
Gay autumn hues enchantingly atone.
Now smilingly the sun sinks low to rest
Behind the burnished curtains of the west.

ALL BEAUTY IS MINE

The trustful charm of children's eyes
Holds never ending treasure,
The splendor of the sun-swept skies
Is spread in lavish measure;
The murmur of the waterfall,
The song of woodland fairies,
The lyrics of the lark's clear call,
Are heard by him who tarries.

The happy memory that clings,
The grace of friendly greeting,
We may embrace, among the things
That are so swift and fleeting.
Within our world's encircling rim,
Tho slow we be in learning,
Elusive beauty waits for him
Who has a heart discerning.

RUSH HOUR TRAFFIC

We city folks are trained to travel
Sandwiched in our trolley cars,
And learn thereby seldom to cavil
At any kind of jolts or jars.
Our fellow sardines oft we greet
And in their ribs sharp elbows poke
But with consideration sweet
They take it merely as a joke.

We never laugh in manner crass,
Tho oddly shaped, humans become,
For fats and leans, when squeezed en masse
Are bound to be bent out of plumb.
Good nature, somehow, seldom fails,
Tho we be creased and rumpled,
And sturdy humor still prevails
When hapless corns are crumpled.

EXTRA MEASURE

Not merely bounden duty done,
But overflowing measure,
Leaves happy recollections spun,
And brings the truest pleasure.

Our work assumes, in each day's test,
Something of finer seeming,
When to each task we give our best,
Its drudgery redeeming.

Fair, friendly deeds our by-paths bless,
Thru closer ties engendered
By brimming cups of kindliness
That love has freely tendered.

THE PERVERSE INANIMATE

Let science explain, if so be that it can
Why objects insensate should tantalize man.
Buttons pop off with a seeming delight
To show our dependence on something so slight.
Tho there's plenty of space in the bathroom, it's plain,
Your toothbrush unerringly drops down the drain;
And your toast may be done to a beautiful brown
But it plumps on the floor with the butter side down.
You'd better duck quick if you step on a rake
For its wallop resembles a minor earthquake.
When your date all depends on appearance alone,
A razor gash ruins the one chin you own.
Contrary mortals we accept as our fate
But why the cantankerous inanimate?
Savants should cease seeking the heights of renown
And settle these things that are wearing us down.

THE DAYS OF REAL FUN

There was a time we used to try
To take the steepest hills "in high,"
And raced our Model T to gain
Enough momentum on the plain
To take us to the very top
Before we slackened to a stop.
With bump, and jolt, and whiz, and whir,
We speeded up to 40 per,
Athrill with daredevil delight
And quite completely hid from sight
Within a cloud of dust that rose
And coated us from head to toes.
Then, if by luck we made the grade,
In glory gained we felt well paid,
And told the tale for days on end
To any who an ear would lend,
And proudly offered to repeat
Our marvelous hill climbing feat.

IT TAKES ALL KINDS

The world abounds in knaves most bold,
At least we read each day
Of flagrant doings, glibly told,
Which seem to point that way.
And yet, why tear our thinning hair
When any place we land,
Outnumbering the meanies, there
Are folks of better brand.

Some grasping guy may do you dirt
And puncture your morale,
But some sweet soul will salve your hurt
And prove himself a pal;
And so my faith in humankind
Is fanned into a glow
Because so many folks, I find,
Are mighty nice to know.

THE BRIGHTER SIDE

There's no call for religion that's sombre,
Altho on display, it won't sell.
The customers now ask for something
Besides merely bypassing hell.
It's an outlook of hope folks are seeking,
And a lilt of elation that gives
A boost to each step of the pathway
One treads every day that he lives.

Faith should lend to life's uncolored canvas
The tone of a heart warming hue,
And with something of noble adventure
Our commonplace living imbue.
It opens the portals of vision
To beauty unnoticed before,
And is the white light oft revealing
The heaven that's right at our door.

FORMULA FOR BUSY FOLK

The duties that knock at our portals,
The tasks that insistently call,
Sometimes have us quite befuddled
How to encompass them all.

Perhaps we should wear mental blinders
The better to focus more true,
So we won't waste our best ammunition
Popping off at each mark within view.

One thing at a time is a habit
That makes many dreams come to pass;
Day by day, an amazing sum total
One thing at a time will amass.

THE THANKFUL HEART

Within the grateful heart there gaily sings
A song of thankfulness for many things.
For homes well loved, now dearer than before,
Since freed from covert threat and made secure.

For cheerful hope that ushers in each day,
And friendship's glow with its unfailing ray.
For pleasure in the work our hands have done,
And the beckoning lure of goals still to be won.

For things grown old and precious with the years,
Mellowed with happy laughter and with tears,
And little glad surprises, all unearned,
Love's priceless gifts for which the heart has yearned.

OUR LEGACY

Ours is a teeming world as each day proves,
Yet small may be the round in which one moves,
With thoughts so filled with petty things
While for our ears the lark exulting sings.
Tho trivial our task may seem, and gray
And drab the daily tenor of our way,
Yet thru the passing seasons, earth and skies
Unfold their changing beauty for our eyes.

Thru centuries rare gifted men have wrought
With chisel, pen, and palette, and have brought
And laid their priceless talents at our feet
And with their gifts our world is now replete;
And we have learned that dull monotony
Dwells not with him whose mind is ever free,
For in our legacy of countless things
Lies all we need to lend the spirit wings.

RECOMPENSE

We feel the sting of dark dismay
When castles toward the sky
Collapse, and dreams upreared each day
In ruins 'round us lie.

As seasons change, while we remain,
New vistas shall we scan,
Yet each bears beauty in its train
As part of one vast plan.

Tho finite, this we still may know,
That naught is poor or small,
And in whatever way men go
Lies recompense for all.

For "one far off divine event"
Creation had its birth,
And thus are we, His creatures meant,
For nobleness and worth.

GUIDANCE

As life unfolds, I know not where
My future way may be,
If I shall tread the upland trail
Or walk beside the sea.
But for this time, a sacred pledge
Shines forth assuringly:
"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace
Whose mind is stayed on Thee."

And if my path some days be dim,
And feet at random roam;
If trusted landmarks fail to guide
When I am far from home,
Then, Father, with my hand in Thine,
May I walk trustingly:
"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace
Whose mind is stayed on Thee."

ANGELS UNAWARE

When a kindly impulse moves you
In the midst of daily din,
Be not careless and unheeding,
Make it welcome and cash in.
Every helpful inclination,
Thoughts considerate that plead;
Do not suffer them to vanish
Seize and follow where they lead.

To each prompting to be gracious
Be hospitable and kind,
Every little service rendered
Leaves a tiny glow behind.
Angels unaware are often
Nearer than perhaps we know —
Little leadings sent from heaven
To wayfarers here below.

FOLKS ARE FUNNY THAT WAY

Strangely enough the folks most apt
To lend a hand to you
Are those who are already rushed
With countless things to do,
And should bad luck befall you and
Misfortune smack you prone,
The ones who'll help you most are those
With troubles of their own.

The folks whose sunny slant on life
Helps heal its smart's and stings
Are often those who know first hand
The seamy side of things;
And he was right, it seems, who said
That life is what you make it,
It's not so much what happens as
The way in which you take it.

A NICE CHAP WHEN YOU KNOW HIM

Some people seem peculiar
In things they do and say,
And we are prone to wonder
Just how they got that way.
It's easy picking flaws in folk
We meet on every hand,
But we forget that hearts hold much
We do not understand.

And if we knew the story
That lies within each life
Our judgments would be kinder,
Our ways more free from strife;
And it would be far better,
And this a happier land,
If we really came to know the folk
We do not understand.

RESULTS

Results may disappoint us
And efforts seem in vain
When barren is our striving
Some cherished end to gain.
Yet these are but the tryouts.
The finals still remain
As long as hearts know yearning
And will to try again.

Indeed, rightly to measure
Results is time's own art,
And that which now looms largest
May be the lesser part;
And it is seeming failure
That oftentimes has taught
Some hint of wisdom dearer
Than was the guerdon sought.

THE FINAL PUNCH

It doesn't pay to get discouraged
And say things simply can't be done,
Persistence often outpoints genius
When there's laurels to be won.
When doggedly you keep on trying
Tho seemingly it's all in vain,
You'll be surprised how very often
You hit the jackpot for a gain.

Failure deters none who possesses
True mettle by reverses tried;
Success reserves her choicest prizes
For him who will not be denied.
Long, long delayed the goal we strive for,
And oft I have a subtle hunch
That life is seeking to discover
If we have that final punch.

HEY MOM!

It's mother who's an all-round man,
What she can't do, no other can.
She stokes the furnace when Pop's flat
And locates Junior's ball and bat.
She is a trouble shooter, who,
In every case knows what to do,
Be it to soothe some childish ache
Or pangs of older hearts that break.

When times are hard she finds a way
To make ends meet on dad's slim pay,
But when there's shekels to be had
Her scent for bargains is not bad.
She entertains her daughter's beau,
For her the pinks and poppies grow
To pretty up each vacant spot,
She also tills the garden plot —
The indispensable! Well say,
That's no one else but Mom, each day!

HOUSEKEEPER PRO TEM

When mother goes to see her folks,
At leaving dad she frets,
And leaves directions without end
Which pop promptly forgets.

For housework, dad applies short cuts,
And boasts of his success.
He tries out dishes he adores
And leaves a ghastly mess.

Then just in time he tidies up,
As only father can,
And welcomes mom's return with warmth,
A somewhat wiser man.

LEAP YEAR

It's leap year, girls, good luck to you,
The days are slipping by,
It only comes one year in four
So you had best be spry.

All's fair in love and war you know,
Each girl must get her man,
Ye bachelors start running, and,
Let him escape who can.

The world owes husbands to you all,
Though far afield they roam;
They're here but not delivered, dears,
You have to tote 'em home.

It's not so simple as it seems,
In fact it's heaps o' trouble,
The critters first must be corraled
And then broke to go double.

Go to it girls with all your stuff,
Still new, though ever old;
The man you nab is the man you win
For life to have and hold.

THE HOOK THAT HOLDS

The way she dances is a dream,
She's perfect for a quiet nook,
Her type is real peaches and cream,
If only she knew how to cook.

Beauty's no deeper than the skin,
The lure will pass that's in a look,
But love survives thru thick and thin
When the little gal knows how to cook.

HOW TO BE A WORRIER

To worry well one needs to know the rules,
A set of tenets never taught in schools.
First, don't be too busy. Who can stew
And be engrossed in useful duties, too?
So, fold the hands, forget the daily needs
Give imagination reign, for worry feeds
On fearsome shapes with which the fancy fills
The path ahead. Too close are present ills
To harrow or affright. Lend not the ear
To any brother's woe, for if you hear
Of some one who is in a tougher jam,
Worry promptly takes it on the lam.
Avoid the helping hand. Within the glow
Of right good will and kindness we show,
Worry droops, and oft times passes out.
We offer part time fussers hereabout
This course in worry, brief, and guaranteed
To aid the earnest worrier to succeed.

THE HITCH-HIKER

Confusion worse confounded reigns,
Sure panic's carbon copy,
When a honey bee decides to hitch
A ride in our jalopy.
All unannounced he flits aboard,
To cause a mighty dither,
At which he scolds, and peevishly
He flutters yon and hither.

Tho all hands try with best intent
To coax the guest politely
Toward an outlet tactfully,
He heeds their pains but slightly.
And, O, the anxious moments till
He blunders, all unknowing,
Upon an exit which we hope
May lead where he was going.

PRESCRIPTION

"A merry heart doeth good," said the wisest
of men,
"Like a medicine" it healeth, again and again.
There's no other remedy, tonic or pills,
That so quickly can banish our manifold ills.
It costs not a penny, it's pleasant to take,
And O, how it lightens a load of heartache!
The bacilli of envy, suspicion, and fear,
Just curl up and die in a heart full of cheer.
It gives us perspective, both wholesome and sane,
And helps fix our eyes on the target again.
It shines up our kindlier natures anew
And uncovers rare traits in the man next to you.
When the world seems a place that's forbidding
and dark,
It changes amazingly when there's a spark
Of bright faith within that calls into play
The song of a heart that is merry each day.

PROCESSING

We've coined a very handy term,
So often heard we almost squirm.
Whatever's done to anything,
We lump it all as "processing".
We process cotton, hogs, and wheat,
The things we wear and all we eat;
Also our doughboys and marines,
And battleships and soup tureens.

The tailor and the barber, too,
Make shopworn males look almost new.
The clinic dandies up a guy
With plastic snoot and new glass eye.
Beauty processed for the trade
Makes grandma young and far less staid,
And girls, once lacking all allure,
Can't be resisted any more.

FACTS ABOUT FATHERS

Father is a fixture

Much needed in the home,

Altho he wears no halo

Above a balding dome.

He's handy with a check book,

A very worthy trait,

Which keeps the budget balanced

And pays the so-called freight.

He loves to give out counsel

To daughter and to son,

Drawn from a former heyday

When things were better done.

As general fixer-upper

He makes a handsome bluff,

There's nothing he won't tackle

If pestered long enough.

About the house you trail him,

When needed, now and then,

By cast off socks and hankies

That lead straight to his den.

He may, in his own household,

With praise be in arrears,

But children, you should hear him

Brag of you for other ears!

RITZY

Barbara wears bi-focals

With swanky airs that vex

And tantalize her playmates

Who wear just common specs.

When she's a grownup lady

She'll look through a lorgnette,

But likely she'll not see you

Unless you rate her set.

OUR KIND OF WEATHER

Our weather is the common kind
That gets but scant attention,
It doesn't class as climate, and
It rates no special mention.
We cannot sell it to the trade,
We cuss it here at home,
Nor ever claim it will grow fuzz
On a denuded dome.

And so because we never sound
Its praises to the skies,
When it's a flop we don't first off
Have to apologize;
And with this worry off our chest,
It's really nice to find,
How many sunny days we have
Among the other kind.

THE WORDS OF LINCOLN

"With malice toward none; with charity for all."

Like manna from heaven these gracious words fall.
A mantle of mercy that covereth all.
Not a whisper of censure, nor hint of disdain,
But a plea for a nation united again.

Like snatches of song that return to impart
New hope to the weary and harassed in heart,
With time hallowed meaning his words live again
To bring benediction to children of men.

O, son of the prairie, we hearken with pride,
And we cherish your counsel as compass and guide,
For you teach us how lofty our mission of state,
How strong are the righteous, how humble the great.

MAN'S HIGH ESTATE

Among His creatures, God has chosen man,
"A little lower than the angels made,"
To have an honored part in His great plan,
Which cannot flower save thru human aid.

For something of Himself He breathed within
This house of clay that we might channels be,
To bear some touch of heaven that would win
The yearning trust of our humanity.

From heart to heart, the Father's grace is shown,
And from each other, it is so designed
That we shall learn how thru His love alone,
May cherished hopes, some day, fulfillment find.

LEARNING THRU LACK

Thru lack alone the wholesome art we learn
Of valuing the blessings each day brings,
And in the school of searching need discern
The everlasting truth of common things.
The benison of rest is doubly sweet
To him whose frame with weariness is spent,
And to the mind that care would oft defeat
The ministry of sleep is heaven sent.

No nectar of the gods on earth below
Stays thirst like cooling streams by freshets fed,
And only hunger teaches us to know
The satisfying sustenance of bread.
No other balm like friendliness can heal
The chilling void in countless lonely hearts —
Something of pain and want we all must feel
To gauge aright the good things life imparts.

OUR HERITAGE

While earth's shrill voice is hushed in darkness deep,
The steadfast stars their onward courses keep
Like sentinels unwearied, who maintain
A ceaseless watch throughout their Lord's domain.
And overhead, a blue ethereal sea
Is flung afar to mantle us, and we
At dusk, beneath this coverlet of care
Are tucked, like children, with our Father's prayer.

The massive hills surmounting green-clad plains
Reveal foundations sure, and woodland lanes
And rolling valleys lush, where birdsong spills
Its charm, proclaim beneficence that fills
A universe of beauty wherein man,
In keeping with an all-inclusive plan,
Unto the very least may have his part
According to the yearning of his heart.

FRONTIERS

Across far reaches men have ranged, until
We know the bounds of this our world, but still
Frontiers remain to lure the restless one
Who senses greater deeds that must be done;
For we are children all, who have but learned
The lesser things. Before us, undiscerned,
The fields of wider knowledge fallow lie.
Thru outlines of our past we may descry
The pattern of those benefits untold
That common elements of earth still hold,
Safe stored by wisdom's hand there to await
The key of one whose hand shall loose the gate
And bring new blessings forth. There is no dearth
In this rich universe for needs of earth.
Supply for each dire lack beside life's stream
Awaits the questing one who bears the gleam.

THE OPEN PORTAL

In the eye of the beholder
Poets say beauty is found,
Let me then be not unmindful
Of the loveliness around.
May the songbird's morning matins
And the murmur of the stream,
Join the lilt of happy laughter
In a symphony supreme.

Let the rainbow's flaming archway
Tell me beauty shall not cease,
And the green clad boughs of woodland
Counsel quietness and peace;
May the eyes that love has lighted
And friendly bonds that never part,
Thru a portal ever open
Leave their impress in my heart.

PAY DIRT

As men have delved within this earthen crust
With patient fortitude and courage rare
For the elusive gold wherein we trust,
So let me thrust beneath the surface bare
Of days that come and go. For I may sieve
From time's swift, running sands some golden trace
Of sweet content, which will suffice to give
The steady glow that no ill can erase.

Then sometimes may I know a glad surprise,
Tho strength be spent and shadows darkly loom,
When pick shall strike that purest gold that lies
In friendly hearts, and hope anew shall bloom.
Thus, may it be my fortune to unearth
Bright nuggets of a true and lasting worth.

SUGARING OFF

Still vivid are the memories that cling
Around the time of sugaring off in spring.
When nights were frosty, and the friendly sun
Shone warmer on each lengthening journey run,
We made our annual trek to uncle's grove
Of sugar maples. There we loved to rove
Where rivulets were fed by lingering snow.
We sampled the sweet sap that trickled slow
From trees that offered bounty without haste,
And found a treat exactly to our taste.
Beneath the sirup vat the coals were red,
And O, the heavenly incense that it shed!
We breathed it deep, along with forest air,
Nor wondered that it was our lot to share
Such wealth as might have been reserved for kings,
Wrapped in the wholesomeness of simple things.

AUTUMN SOLILOQUY

The annual march of months winds to a close,
And each in turn some fitting gift has brought;
Now vividly the autumn pageant glows
In gladness over all that has been wrought.
The maturing year is blessed with harvest days,
For seed, through toil, is tended not in vain,
And we may pause with Nature and appraise
That we have reaped which will with us remain.
Let us reflect, and add to memory's store
The new found scenes that freshened older trails;
Dear faces, seen again, long loved before,
Frail treasure, gathered in, that never fails.
So, let us harvest all the brighter things
The season brought, and from the heart's embrace
They shall return with sweet rememberings,
And so enrich each pleasure with new grace.

THANKSGIVING

If, in this busy world of toil,
Some share shall be my own;
Then as I truly rule a realm
As king upon a throne.
If there be those I may call friends,
True mettle, tried of old;
Though proud estates may not be mine,
Yet I have wealth untold.
If I the love of dear ones know,
The trust of children's eyes,
No richer gift the wide world holds
Beneath the vaulted skies.
The Lord His largess has bestowed,
Exceeding earthly store —
O, may my heart full thankful be —
Today and evermore.

AT CHRISTMAS TIME

This is the season when within our hearts
Awaken echoes of each chiming bell,
And candle gleams and mellow fireside darts
Reflect from sparkling eyes and softly tell
Of hallowed joys of old that richly bless.
The saving alchemy of Christmas cheer,
The healing balm of yuletide happiness,
Will linger on to color days more drear
With hope's bright star. The holly's steadfast green
Within the neighbor's window, whispers clear
Of things more permanent in which are seen
The promise of surcease from threat and fear;
For in our glad rejoicing, grandly true,
The spirit of good will to men lives on,
And in the heart of Christmas, shining thru,
Joy shall remain when shadows all are gone.