

FROM DAY TO DAY

With

B. L. BRUCE



1945

THE OLD MAPLE TREE

The old maple tree is as dead as can be
And its branches are leafless and bare,
But on days that are long we're regaled with the song
Of the dwellers that congregate there.
All up and down its gnarled knotty trunk
There are holes where the swallows nest,
And sometimes a jay who is passing that way
Stops in just to gossip and rest.

Tiny wrens flit about and dart in and out,
No mortal so busy as they,
There's a woodpecker who beats a rousing tattoo
In his merry methodical way.
It seems rather like an apartment hotel
Where guests are lighthearted and free,
As they twitter away, these tenants so gay,
That live in the old maple tree.

CHRISTMAS BELLS

Each joyous Christmas brings the charm again
That lies within an oft recurring strain
Of melody returning to impart
Once more its touch of gladness to the heart.
And when we hear the chiming Yuletide bells
There's something in their echo that foretells
The certain coming of a happier day
When Christmas joy shall never fade away.

For Christmas has grown sweeter thru the years,
Tho burdened with our strife and bitter tears.
And in each tapered candle's tiny glow
Shines hope that shall outlive all human woe.
The well loved Christmas carols tell anew
The everlasting triumph of the true,
And stir our hearts to happiness again
Like music of an oft recurring strain.



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FOREWORD

Many of the verses in this book have appeared in the Tribune's In the Wake of the News column. As its conductor, I am happy B. L. Bruce (Bruce L. Birmingham) chose this means of bringing his work to public attention and that it has helped him win the recognition he deserves.

— Arch Ward

DEDICATION

This book is affectionately dedicated to my wife and daughter in appreciation of their helpful counsel and constant encouragement which have aided materially in its production.

Acknowledgement is made to the Chicago Tribune and the Illinois State Journal of Springfield, Ill. for their kind permission to reprint matter which has appeared in their columns.

MOTHERS ARE LIKE THAT

In olden days King Solomon
Was rated very wise,
For pat and pithy sayings, why,
He really took the prize.
But if he'd had to answer all
The questions mothers do,
The chances are he would have flunked,
The same as I—or you.

Then there was Job, that patient man,
Hard luck was his renown.
It seems old Nick gave Job the works
But couldn't wear him down.
A mother's path is likewise strewn
With trials she may not shirk,
Without acclaim she meets them all
As part of her day's work.

We've always heard that Sampson was
A man of mighty strength,
Until a lady barber trimmed
His locks to briefer length.
But if for one short day he'd tried
To tag mother about
And crash the bargain counter, well,
He'd likely have passed out.

We sometimes think that beauties all
In Hollywood reside,
But mother has a quality
That shines from the inside.
The glamor we admire is oft
Just laid on with a trowel,
But mother's looks that so allure,
Is beauty of the soul.

THIS WORLD OF OURS

There's a lot of things that are wrong today
But a great many more that are right;
The grass is as green as it ever was,
And the sunshine just as bright.
There was once a prophet who said of the world,
This place has gone to pot,
I'm the only faithful one that's left
Among this worthless lot.
This gloomy Gus was soon set right
As every one must be
Who groans, O Lord, this world's a mess,
Find a better one for me.
So don't string along with the croakers
Who see ruin right at hand,
But join up with the men of faith
And boost to beat the band.
For the sky is as blue as it ever was
And the stars are just as bright,
There may be plenty that's wrong with the world
But there's a whole lot more that's right.

GIVING ADVICE

We mortals love to give advice
And how our faces glisten
When far or near we find an ear
That seems disposed to listen.
No matter what may be the ill,
We're not appalled by any,
Both great and small we tackle all
Nor charge a single penny.
And what a glad exuberance
Within us holds dominion
When circumstance affords a chance
To air our pet opinion.
But in this joy there's one alloy
That moves us to forsake it,
Altho it's nice to give advice
So few incline to take it.

PREFACE

No scientist has yet analyzed the stuff of which dreams are made or traced thought to its source. We may wonder where folk get their wise sayings, their droll humor, or their invigorating viewpoint, but none can enlighten us.

In lieu, therefore of a valid explanation, fancy depicts for me an intangible world about us fairly crammed with unused bons mots and pithy lines, all to be had for the taking. Here, clever comebacks cavort and gentle whimsies flit about like butterflies, while heart warming thoughts like beautiful tropical fowl take wing, and lofty sentiments parade in stately rhyme.

Somewhat like the hopeful naturalist who goes out with his net to snare rare specimens for a prized collection, I too have occasionally ventured forth into this fertile realm of uncaptured idea and phrase, to bring back, if I might, something for this tiny volume of verse.

If anyone shall find in it aught to cheer a dull moment, to ease heartache, to uncover beauty in life's pattern and meaning in its design, the author will be amply repaid.

BRUCE L. BIRMINGHAM

FROM DAY TO DAY

In every walk of life we find
True quality of heart and mind.
Among the humble and the high,
Wherever paths may chance to lie,
Each trail unfolds an avenue
Of friendship we may wander thru.
Each day is like a fruitful field
Where folks are plants that amply yield
Sustaining cheer; and traits most kind
Are not to any class confined.
Tho scenes delight where'er we go,
A deeper yearning yet we know,
To feel the touch of a friendly hand
And know there are hearts that understand.
In those we trust thru good and ill
We find the sweetest solace still.



THE WAR GOES ON

Within each victory garden plot
Grim goes the battle tide,
No quarter asked or given by
The foes of either side.
The beetle and the borer tribes
In force are on the loose,
And have a special fondness for
The things that you produce.

In camouflage the aphides
On tender foliage prey,
While nimble leaf hoppers cavort
In calisthenic play.
And other enemies there are,
As mildew, rust, and blight,
That do you dirt the livelong day,
(These also work by night.)

Down underneath in sapper style
The grubs and cutworms work,
And overhead with motors cut
Mosquito squadrons lurk.
It is a battle royal waged
Each hour of the day
By gallant gardeners deployed,
Who work and trust and spray.

THE CHANGING WORLD

The underprivileged infants of our era don't know what they're missing. Time was when a baby could have himself a real frolic just by getting a two handed grip on grandad's gorgeous whiskers.

ANY ONE KNOW ?

I'd feel much safer when traveling if only I knew how the girl who used to flag the train with a red petticoat when the bridge was out is performing this heroic service nowadays.

SOMETHING SHOULD BE DONE

Some things, it seems, need changing here
Within our so-called mundane sphere.
I list a few, in case you doubt it,
So something can be done about it.

The summer's too hot; the winter too cold,
At least that's the plaint I've often heard told;
It rains when the weather is damp as the deuce,
And nobody knows how to turn off the juice.

A figure that's streamlined and nifty and neat,
May be yours ANYTIME (if you don't care to eat),
But a love for the savor of skillet and griddle,
Is likely to leave you a bulge in the middle.

If one's too old, he's in the way,
Too young, he clutters up the day;
The clever lass doesn't rate a look
And the dimpled cutie cannot cook.

If shy of dough, there are things one lacks,
And with a wad, there's the income tax!
So what's to do, I ask you brother,
If it isn't one thing, it's another.

A TRUE BENEFACTOR

The toeless shoe, so popular among women, was doubtless
designed by a man who had been kicked on the shins so often
that he finally pondered out this boon to the henpecked male.

WHY, OF COURSE!

The saying that woman's work is never done, was something
of a mystery until I learned that it referred to her
perpetual face makeup job.

JANUARY

NEW YEAR PROMISE

We somehow crave that each oncoming year
May differ from the last,
But well it is for us they follow still
The pattern of the past.
There will be strength anew as days go by,
For loads that we must bear;
Altho there may be grieving of the heart,
There will be friends to share.

Flecked moonlight will be spilled upon the snow
That shields the barren soil;
There will be gay laughter amid tears,
And slumber after toil.
We shall find duties knocking at our door,
But pride in work well done;
There will be soft splendor in the sky
Where sinks the evening sun.

THE DEAD OF WINTER

Sing ho, for the old red flannels
We knew in a bygone day,
When the mercury was skidding,
So cozy, snug, and gay.
At the first cold snap we donned them
With many a tearful fuss,
And all thru the dead of winter
From chill they sheltered us.

But O, the shame when we saw them
With their vivid scarlet hue
As they swung in the breeze on washday
Exposed to public view.
They used to itch like blazes,
But still each zero spell
I yearn for the old red flannels
That I recall so well.

THE OLD CALENDAR

Good-by, old calendar! It's true
That time is on the wing;
So brief a while ago, it seems,
We wondered what you'd bring.

You were so clean and crammed with days
And held the potent lure
Of things unknown within our hands
That beckoned on before.

Then, as your leaves fell, one by one,
We found within each date
No stern, unchangeable command
Of an unbending fate.

But for each kindly service wrought
With willing heart and mind,
In measure vastly multiplied
You paid us back in kind.

Each timid smile sent forth, returned
And brought more smiles along,
And every tune so gently hummed
Has burst forth into song.

So, calendar of days to come
I'm very sure it's true
That what you hold in store depends
On what we give to you.

BRIDE IN A BANDBOX

A bride in a bandbox,
There's nothing more pat
Then a bride starting out
In her own tiny flat.

It's just like a doll house
Right up to the minute,
But what you'll love most
Is the little girl in it.

There's a sparkle of newness
All over the place
But it cannot compare
With the glow in her face.

From pantry to parlor,
Bath, bedroom, and hall,
She can hardly believe
She's the queen of it all.

Sweet bride in a bandbox,
We're pulling for you,
May your rosiest dreams
For the future come true.

CREDIT FOR DEPENDENTS

Mama's little darling,
Lambikins deluxe
Income credit rated
At five hundred bucks.

Daddy's sweet deduction
Entered on line four
Now you're much more precious
Than you were before.

GROWING UP

There vanished from our home some way,
A chubby cherub small,
And in her stead there came to stay,
Our daughter, slim and tall.

No more the patter of small feet,
That busy elf reveals;
This maid moves with an even grace—
Our daughter wears high heels.

Her dolls long since were laid aside,
Sweet Jane and sisters eight,
Bereft a doting mother's care,
They ponder their sad fate.

Gone are the dear delights of days
Of counting tiny toes,
And tales of piggies market bound—
Now daughter's having beaux.

She nods no more o'er oft told tales
Of fairy prince and gnome;
'Tis we who nod while waiting up
For daughter to come home.

No longer piggy-back she rides
With shouts of sheer delight;
It would be so undignified,
Unthinkable, O quite!

That she is really growing up,
We can no longer doubt,
For now she puts her make-up on,
When she is stepping out.

THE WINTER GARDENER

Since the seed catalog lately came in our mail
Dad delves in its pages each night,
And no tale of adventure, tho lurid and bold,
Ever gave him so great a delight.

How his fancy unfolds as he gazes entranced
At the vegetables vivid in hue!
There are beets with a brilliance no pen can portray
And radishes wet with the dew.

The carrots are slender and sleek to behold,
The tomatoes an eye filling treat,
The turnip, so lowly, here rates a rare prize—
Can it be these are merely to eat?

Already Pop's laid out his garden complete,
In beds with their rows straight and true;
Tho the ice and the snow still imprison the earth,
He can see the green sprouts poking thru.

Yes, there's magic bound up in that seed catalog,
With its pictures so graphic and gay,
When Pop falls for its charm, tho the winter hangs on,
He hops plumb to the middle of May.

FEBRUARY

THE VOICE OF LINCOLN

From out the past in every time of stress
The voice of Lincoln speaks to us again
And words freighted with wisdom for his day
Are potent still to stir the hearts of men.
He speaks of mighty conflict that shall test
The will of free born peoples to endure,
And on his hearers lays the solemn charge
Of guarding liberty forevermore.
He saw in freedom something dearly won
And voiced the call of these, our honored dead,
That we the living staunchly carry on
With an increased devotion in their stead.
The world will little note, he humbly said,
The halting words that we shall utter here,
But graven in its heart the deeds of these
Who gave their all, shall be forever dear.
He bade us that we here highly resolve
That government thru justice and true worth
Shall blossom from each costly sacrifice,
Nevermore to perish from the earth.

VALENTINE'S DAY

This is the season when Cupid makes hay
And drums up his trade in a manner most gay.
With careless precision he looses his darts
That fly to their targets in innocent hearts.
Now any one may be a victim this way,
And then there's no telling just what he may say,
So a missive avowing, "To You I'll Be True,"
Sometimes is sent to a dozen or two;
And if it should read, "To my darlingest Toots,
Suppose you and I should go in cahoots?"
Just remember the little blond god is the one
Who makes with his arrows and has himself fun.

HILLS AND VALES

O, hills that rim the valleys!
To you I lift my eyes,
Untouched by time and tumult
You thrust toward the skies.
Upon your tranquil bosom
Light rests the winter's snow,
Serene your heights, untroubled,
Amid the blasts that blow.
Upon your summits glimmer
The first faint streaks of dawn,
And there the kiss of sunset
Clings when day is gone.

I love the charm of valleys,
The lush and fruitful plain,
Where brooks wind thru the meadows
And waving fields of grain.
Here men are drawn together,
And laugh, and love, and toil,
Learning to live as neighbors
Upon this friendly soil.
Something of faith grows constant
And cheer revives again,
While hills above keep vigil
And valleys still sustain.

WAYSIDE SENTINELS

The hollyhocks are blooming by the roadside,
Like grenadiers on duty they salute
Each traveler who hast'ning on his journey,
Is charmed by martial ranks so sweetly mute.
Proudly erect and stately is their carriage,
On guard before the wayside cottage door;
In lonely lanes and by the rambling fences
With loveliness they mantle hill and moor.
The hollyhocks are blooming by the roadside,
Aglow with tints that match the sunset's hue,
Prolific blossoms scattered here and yonder,
Gay beauty on parade for all to view.

DISCOVERY OF CHICAGO

There is much to be seen in our city,
So we hear from outsiders who know,
But people who just merely live here
Haven't time to find out if it's so.
Each year we jog off on far journeys
In search of fair scenes that allure,
While tourists, enthused and ecstatic,
Tell of wonders that thrive at our door.

They are won by the sweep of the lake front,
(Now and then we have noticed it, too);
They proclaim us a fountain of culture,
I wonder if this can be true?
Our colleges, playgrounds, and beaches,
Draw praises unstinted and strong —
This is something we'll have to look into,
All of these folks can't be wrong!

ERSATZ ENGLISH

Good folks there are, both gay and chatty,
Who sometimes almost drive us batty,
By piecing out their conversation
With bits of patchwork information.
They rave about some modern rig,
Referred to as a thingamajig,
A thingumbob or whatchamacallit,
And say you simply must install it;
While the shining hero of love's romance
Is a Mr. Whatshisname, perchance.
"You know what I mean" is supposed to convey
All that they haven't the time to say.
They laugh at their jokes and so might we all
Except that the point they seldom recall.
With synthetic phrase in their cheerfulest way
They slay the king's English and us every day.

WINTER IN THE COUNTRY

When the winter days are with us, fond remembrance beckons
me
Where the snowy glist'ning landscape stretches far as eye can
see,
And the frosty air with crimson sets the youthful cheek aglow
With a flame that burns the brighter 'gainst the whiteness of
the snow.

I can hear the merry voices of the coasters on the hill
And the loud and lusty shouting when some boaster takes a
spill.

There is skating on the mill pond where we found a keen
delight

Gliding in and out the circle of the bonfire's leaping light.

There's a mighty snowbank nestling high against the smoke-
house door

Where we dug a robber's cavern to secrete our smuggled store;
In my fancy comes the jingle of the sleigh bells' cheery chime—
Sweet was boyhood in the country in the days of winter time.

COUNTRY SAUSAGE

There's a day along in winter;
Ere the weather waxes warm,
When we get our country sausage
From the folks down on the farm.
With a whopping stack of wheat cakes,
There's a treat for any man;
What a heav'nly odor rises
When it sizzles in the pan!
Oft on fancy fare I've feasted,
But it lacked that sav'ry charm
Of the homemade country sausage
From our folks down on the farm.



THE SNOWMAN

Our snowman is a charming blend
Of dignity and careless grace,
His pompous presence in the yard
Makes people pause before our place.

The children fashioned him with care,
A task that proved but jolly sport;
There's no doubt but that he adds
Distinction of a certain sort.

A stovepipe hat, sans top, he wears,
Rare relic of a bygone day,
Then to belie his seeming caste,
He smokes a common pipe of clay.

With nonchalance he sports a cane
That well befits a man of snow,
An icicle of gleaming length
That from the corner eaves hung low.

He loves the frigid wintry days
And glories in them one by one,
Nor fears the fateful day when he
Shall be laid low by yonder sun.

ARITHMETIC LESSON

Arithmetic, the bane of schooltime days,
Our early labored efforts well repays;
In many fields we find its simple rules
Will solve the problems met outside of schools.
It was Addition first that brought us woe,
But as the seasons pass we come to know
That if we Add contentment to our gains
Its sure serenity our heart sustains.
We may Subtract, and yet be richer still,
All petty thought, and envy, and ill will;
And we may Multiply by tables true
The touch of kindness in all we do.
The sum of all our blessings will expand
If we Divide the gifts within our hand.
Like roots transplanted, each will seek the sun
And grow into a host, where was but one.

A TWO FOLD PLAN

Man lives his life close to the soil.
But with his head held high,
Tho he must lend his hands to toil,
His eyes may scan the sky.

Wise Providence with sure appeal
Has wrought a twofold plan
Whereby the real and the ideal
Are blended in each man.

Among the workers let me try
To bear a useful part,
No less than this will satisfy
The self-reliant heart.

And yet desire upward flows
For fabric still more fine
To clothe each shining dream that shows
A plan that is divine.

THE GAME IS ON

Each day of our lives there's a game we all play
And none are mere spectators here
Who sit on the sidelines apart from the fray
To cavil and boo, or to cheer.
There are few stellar roles in this contest called life,
But there's something that each one can do;
Never think of small moment your part in the strife
For the team is depending on you.

There are times when the outlook is not very bright
And our spirits are heavy with dread,
But the least extra effort may win for the right
When the issue just hangs by a thread.
Our goal may be stakes that are worthy and high
And each day with new chances is rife,
To boost for our team with a sturdier try,
As we play in this game of life.

CITATIONS

For gallant service in behalf of all
That far exceeds exacting duty's call,
High honors are bestowed. And it is true
On life's great battlefield, whate'er you do,
There is a fertile realm for eager hands
Beyond compulsion of the day's demands,
Where rare rewards are waiting to be won
And toil is something more than duty done.

The touch of beauty added to the thing
You do will stir the silent heart to sing
And bring a joy more lasting, it may be,
Than all the gain of pure utility.
Each kindly service wrought at love's behest
Is by some inner substance doubly blest;
It adds the doer's name to honor's scroll
And pins a shining medal on the soul.

MARCH

SULPHUR AND MOLASSES

About this time of year when we
Observe how green the grass is,
Keen memories return to mind
Of sulphur and molasses.
A heaping spoonful night and morn
We greeted with grimaces,
Assured that we must swallow it
To keep our shining faces.
For young and old its virtues held,
Or whether well or ailing;
For man and beast alike it was
A remedy unfailing.
But now they've learned to renovate
The modern human chassis,
So lucky kids don't have to take
Their sulphur and molasses.

THE TOO EARLY ROBIN

Sweet trav'ler from some tropic strand
Where soft the south wind blows,
Perchance rare fragrance bringest thou
Of myrtle and aloes.
Just skip the gush, the robin quoth,
I very nearly froze,
This place is really only fit
For seals and Eskimos.

Glad songster of the coming spring
We list for notes full sweet.
Not one wee squawk, the redbreast croaked,
Until I get some heat,
Then rustle up a worm or two,
A bird, you know, must eat.

FLYERS OF KITES

The boys were flying kites today
Where skies were clear and blue,
And boisterous winds joined in the sport
As if they loved it, too.
Sometimes the kites would hug the ground
As tho they feared to start,
Sometimes they pitched and tossed and dove
Like tricksters at their art;
And then when patience was near spent,
On currents sweeping high,
With graceful ease they mounted up
And floated in the sky.

We, too, are children flying kites,
With eager hands and oft,
Tho feet must follow beaten paths
We send our hopes aloft.
Our cherished plans, ambitions keen,
Pet wishes fond and fair,
Desires nurtured from within
We launch upon the air.
Dear loves and longings never told,
Frail kites of dream stuff these,
With hopes and fears we send them forth,
And pray God's fav'ring breeze.

HOUSE CLEANING

The gent who wears that hunted look,
Is not perforce some missing crook.
There's reason for his harassed air,
His tie askew, his tousled hair,
One sock of green and one of gray—
They're cleaning house at home today.

The furniture is stacked about,
And if he eats, he's dining out;
Life sweet and tranquil heretofore,
Is all at once a dreadful bore.
This gloomy Gus was erstwhile gay—
They're cleaning house at home today.

CARD INDEX

When Judy laughs, I like the way
She wrinkles up her nose,
And Connie's candy is the kind
For which a fella goes.
Patricia dances with the ease
Of one who treads on air,
While Doris fascinates me with
The luster of her hair.

Clarissa's eyes remind me of
The blue of springtime flowers,
And Betty has—but what's the use,
I might go on for hours.
My heart has filed each charm away
To guide its choice aright,
A card index complete, but still
It doesn't help a mite.

MERELY MY SISTER

Jim marvels, as a brother will,
Why fellows fall for sister Lil,
To him she's nuisance Number One
Who tattles everything he's done.
But even Joe, his bosom pal,
The lucky brother of sweet Sal,
Is locoed by the lure of Lil,
Tho otherwise he's normal still.
And as for fascinating Sal,
Pursued by his enamored pal,
To brother Joe she merely is
That sassy kid sister of his.
And secretly he pities Jim
And wonders what is wrong with him,
A chum who rates a nifty gal,
What can he see in sister Sal!

MAN'S MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT

To be caught shopping in the ladies' lingerie section.

WHEN YOU'RE IN LOVE

When all the world about you
Thru a ruby haze is seen,
And your nature's sweetly seasoned
With a dash of saccharine;
When you gently murmur, "Thank you"
When you're given a rude shove,
Make no mistake about it, sister,
You're in love.

When each day is just a journey
On a great big sea of bliss,
And you want to hug the milkman
When he says, "Good morning Miss,"
When you flash a toothy smile upon
The vendor at the door,
You may know the love bug's got you
And you're really hooked for sure.

When troubles seem so trifling
That nothing makes you weep,
And you step as sprightly as on air,
And babble in your sleep;
When you have the disposition
Of a cooing turtledove,
You're passing thru life's grandest phase,
You're in love.

PET PEEVES

People who take you at your word when you say, "Now
don't go to a bit of trouble for me."

NOTHING NEW

Long before the term saboteurs became a part of our
language, the neighbors' chickens used to sneak thru the fence
and dig themselves a nice hole right in the center of ma's
choicest flower bed.

APRIL

AT EASTER TIME

This is the season of the year
When song is sweeter to the ear,
And when glad anthems clearer ring
Because of every goodly thing
That Easter brings. On every side
We see the all-transforming tide
Of springtime come. For us reborn
With all the piquancy of morn,
Are faded fields and barren boughs
Where nature's artistry endows
All growing things. Each year we view
This marvel, old, yet ever new,
And know a wonder all sublime
With every coming Easter time.

Each tiny shoot and bud imparts
A spark of faith to doubting hearts,
A tale of triumph o'er the gloom
Of winter's night. Each Easter bloom
Is fraught with hope, serene and high,
That like a rainbow girds the sky
With promise bright; and for us still,
No matter what we face of ill,
From every tomb of dark dismay
An angel waits to roll away
The heavy stone. Fling wide the gates!
The gladness of the Easter waits.

OUR GARDEN

Father's spading the garden out in the back yard,
He's sweating with unwonted toil,
But he's glowing with hopes of a glorious year
With that wonderful segment of soil.
It stretches from sidewalk unto the garage,
But no far-reaching landed estate
Ever stirred heart to beat with more bountiful pride
Than the garden within our back gate.

Dad has books, and of seeds an enormous supply,
Every tool that could lighten his labor,
The while he discusses the weather and crops
O'er the fence with a like-minded neighbor.
Through the bleak, chilly spring he has fussed for this day,
Whose coming he scarce could await,
For the biggest event of the year is when Pop
Plants the garden within the back gate.

SEASONAL PROBLEMS

Each dawn there sounds a symphony
Most gay but not amusing,
The twittering of robins that
Disturbs my morning snoozing.
I hear them chirping back and forth
In noisy disputation
Whether to lease their former flat
Or hunt a new location.

Of Lebensraum there is no lack,
But they must plan their quarters
To house a lusty progeny
Of baby sons and daughters.
In spite of war priorities
Their home will soon be fashioned,
And never will they need to fret
Lest juicy worms be rationed.

ODE TO A PUMPKIN PIE

How brightly glows the golden brown,
Inviting pumpkin pie,
A noble work of art indeed,
Appealing to the eye.

But when its spicy odor smites
The eager, sniffing nose,
It rouses more emotions than
The fragrance of the rose.

All hail the apex of the feast—
Dessert that has no peer,
A wedge with whipped cream on the roof,
No more we ask for here.

THE GLORIFIED GARDENER

The modern Aladdin, at this time of year,
Goes sallying forth to sow,
But instead of dark magic he bears garden seeds,
A most hopeful heart, and a hoe.
He tickles the soil, and lo! for his toil,
Spring neat rows of nonfading green,
Then such parsnips and pumpkins as citified bumpkins
Seldom, if ever, have seen.

Now he is able to have on the table
Fresh provender fit for a queen,
And filled with such foods he eft-soon exudes
A cocky, benevolent mien.
He has for allies the broad smiling skies,
Old Sol and the sweet smelling rain,
And nature includes with her sunniest moods
The gift of contentment's rare gain.

IT'S A KNOCKOUT

For quick action nothing beats stepping on the business
end of an upturned rake.

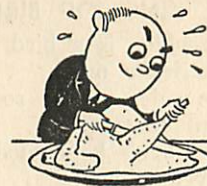
NOW HE BELONGS TO THE AGES

The fight of time but serves to show
The Lincoln we have learned to know,
As like unto a mountain height
Where sunlight lingers tho the night
Descends below. Clearer appears
His outline thru receding years.
Son of the soil, patient and strong,
By nature bred a foe of wrong,
Thru lash of circumstance made kin
With all who struggle, toil, and spin.
The weight his heart was made to bear
Upon his face carved lines of care,
But left no malice. There instead
Was charity's sweet mantle spread,
Enfolding all; and kindness
With wisdom joined in words that bless
The world of men. We face our day
With faith that holds that freedom's way
Shall never perish from the earth
In this fair land that gave him birth.

DEARER THAN WE KNEW

Whence comes unbidden this lump to the throat
And why does this moisture unchecked dim the eye,
When the strains of the Star Spangled Banner are heard
And the flag of our country is passing by?
Somehow we sense that these symbols enfold
Dear privilege bought with a price,
And now we have learned that each right we enjoy
Is ours at the cost of a great sacrifice.

No longer may we, as in seasons now past,
Envision unthinking the blessings we hold,
For the value of freedom is told us anew
By the star in the window of blue or of gold.
And each vacant place in a house by the way,
And each mother's prayer that ascends to God's throne,
Is silently telling as day follows day
Of the worth of the birthright we hold as our own.



WHEN FATHER CARVES

When father carves, it is a time
That teems with tense delight,
Tho seeming docile, still that bird
Gives dad an awful fight.

With voices hushed we huddle round
The scene of carnage rife;
It is a battle royal, but
Pop wields a wicked knife.

He feints and parries, thrusts and jabs,
But when it seems a cinch,
The turkey turns a somersault
And goes into a clinch.

And when at last the struggle's o'er,
The pater beams with pride,
Altho there's gravy on his vest
And dressing far and wide.

"Some folks make such a fuss about
This carving job," sezze,
"When once you get the knack, why, shucks,
It's simple as can be."

Each year we live it thru anew,
In just the same old way,
When father carves the turkey on
Our glad Thanksgiving day.

DOWN ON THE FARM

O me and O my, by gum and by golly!
Life on the farm is getting plumb jolly.
The girls have enlisted, they're out in the sun,
A-boosting the farmer in more ways than one.
When the rooster gives out with his call in the morn
They hie themselves forth to detassel the corn.
With lipstick bedecked in the takingest way
They're driving the tractors and making the hay.
There's a new hired man known to all as plain Pat,
But don't be misled, it's a gal for all that;
And Myrtle, adorned in the niftiest togs,
Attends to the business of slopping the hogs.
How to keep the boys home, once a cause for alarm,
Has been settled by sending the girls to the farm.
It's a doggone good system, by heck, let me say,
But why wasn't this ever done in my day?

ROASTIN' EARS

It's fine to make a visit
To the country at the time
Along about midsummer
When the roastin' ears are prime.
When Nature made a roastin' ear
She did a nifty job
Of packaging a toothsome treat
Called corn upon the cob.
Each kernel's neatly anchored
To a handle trim and dandy
And there's a heap of eatin'
In a fashion mighty handy.
It has that tasty flavor
For which a fella goes
And no one cares if butter leaves
A shine upon each nose.
The housewife gets an encore
Every time that she appears
With her steaming platter piled up high
With golden roastin' ears.

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

When the boys are playing marbles
And the girls are skipping ropes,
Then we get a skittish feeling
That lends wings to all our hopes.

For upon a wall is scribbled
There for all the world to scan,
This announcement so revealing,
"Ann loves Joe, and Joe loves Ann."

Not in formal style exactly,
Blushingly denied, in sooth,
Mayhaps just a teasing rumor
Bearing but a grain of truth.

Yet thru leaden skies of winter
Breaks the spring's eternal glow,
When that candid scrawl informs me,
"Joe loves Ann, and Ann loves Joe."

MAY

MAYTIME

O who can be a pessimist
When Maytime weaves its spell?
A breeze that lilac plumes have kissed
Confides that all is well.

One cannot cling to thoughts of gloom
When May is at the door,
With yonder cherry tree in bloom
Our world is right once more.

There's nothing can be wrong for long
When every morning brings
The robin's reveille in song
And the scent of growing things.

COWSLIPS

O, where are the cowslips that grew by the creek
In the shade of its waters so cool?
We picked them for teacher to heap on her desk
On our way to the old country school.
I hear of the flowers that bloom in the spring,
Of bluebells and trilliums fair,
But often I wonder when blossoms return,
If the cowslips are still growing there.

THE FIRST RADISH

Swelled with pride, Pop's near to bustin'
And he's stepping plenty high;
He's been out into the garden
And there's triumph in his eye.
Now encased in sweet contentment,
He exudes a rare conceit,
For it seems he found a radish
That was big enough to eat.

Dad was worried over business,
And upset with vague alarm,
Till he visited the garden
Which he proudly calls the farm;
And among the stuff that grows there,
All in rows so trim and neat,
He dug up a plumpish radish
That was big enough to eat.

We've had onions on the table,
And there'll soon be lettuce, too;
Now the beets are due for thinning
And the beans are coming thru.
O, there may be things more thrilling,
But I'm sure there's none more sweet,
Than when Pop first finds a radish
That is big enough to eat.

NATURE'S BALANCE

Don't envy other people till
You know their story thru,
The folk who seem most fortunate
May have their troubles too.
I covet not the millions of
The wealthy Mr. Scraggs
Considering his lot includes
A wife that nags and nags.

Young Flasher is a knockout in
His devastating clothes,
Or would be if it wasn't for
The wart upon his nose.
Dame Nature deals to all of us
Both fair and rainy weather,
And benefits and burdens seem
To come tied up together.

THE CHEERFUL UPSTART

Consider the dandelion, if you will—
He's constantly eradicated, still
It seems the more he's weeded out,
The more we see of him about.
Tho dosed with man's most lethal spray,
Torn out by root and cast away,
He cheerfully appears at dawn
In gaudy grandeur on the lawn.

This so resilient resistance
And such persnickety persistence
Leaves us aghast with consternation,
Yet claim our grudging admiration.
Beside our pampered plants so frail
He waxes masterful and hale—
I wonder, would it be too silly
If he were crossed with our fair lily?

THE KING OF BIRDS

The turkey gobbler is a bird
Of most majestic mien,
That he's the ruler of the roost
Is plainly to be seen.
He struts as though he owned the earth,
A despot, yet withal,
Protector of the timid fowl
That heed his beck and call.
He has the proud and pompous air
Of one that's born to reign,
Quite like a monarch in his right
He rules his small domain.
But we admire the most of all
His grand imposing way,
When on the platter he appears
Upon Thanksgiving day.

DECEMBER

SIGNS OF CHRISTMAS

When Christmas nears, deep mystery
Pervades our domicile,
And ways prosaic hitherto
Take on a secret thrill.

For Santa's helpers bore within,
And subterfuge is rife;
Both young and old within our walls
Now lead a double life.

Junior and dad conspire with stealth,
And granny's full of guile,
While mother wears a guilty look,
And sis a knowing smile.

And bulging bundles now and then
Pop out from places queer,
And plots and counterplots crisscross,
When Christmas time is near.



IN MEMORY OF A SOLDIER

(Lieut. Robert D. Whiting)

How seeming short the years in which you grew
To manhood in our midst! Wherein you knew
The joys of childhood and the fuller quest
And hopes of growing youth. None could have guessed
In those fair days the part you were to play
In the stern exactions of this troubled day.
You gave the full allegiance of your heart
To quiet ways of peace. There was no part
Or place within your thought for warring strife.
You loved the paths of home and found in life
The grace of friendliness, and still more dear,
The kinship, well beloved, of those most near.

You owed no greater fealty to our land
Than we who never had to take our stand
Against the foe; and yet at duty's call
You faced the unknown dangers that appall,
And in our stead you stood and bravely met
The utmost challenge of war's darksome threat.
'Faithful unto death' - - thus the record ends - - -
But memories remain like faithful friends,
And we recall that in your nature rare
Was courage joined with gentleness most fair;
And sorrow mingles with a wholesome pride
In the hearts of those you walked so close beside.

THE SERVICE STAR

O tiny window emblem
 How eloquent you are!
 There's a tug at the heart each time we see
 The simple service star.
 You tell a summons answered,
 Of courage true and fine,
 Of youth that briskly marched away
 And took its place in line.
 You speak of a home that's loyal,
 Where prayers go up each day,
 The voice of love that forms a link
 With a lad that's far away.
 But O, there's pride in your message
 Because of the part you play,
 In saving the things men cherish
 For the dawn of a better day.
 And I read in your deep blue symbol
 A meaning crystal clear,
 That a land to which much is given
 Is a land made doubly dear.

THE PROVING GROUND

Our world is at the proving ground
 For men and nations, too.
 To try the stuff of which we're made
 And find the false and true.
 We cannot live, Abe Lincoln said,
 Part slave and partly free,
 And in a fiery trial mankind
 Will prove which it shall be.
 We'll test the tools of war, and death
 The arbiter shall be,
 And we shall learn if we possess
 The fiber of the free;
 For now our future hope depends
 On iron of the soul,
 And only spirit's tempered steel
 Can win the final goal.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Tree of green from northern clime,
 Stranger in the city street,
 Bringing fragrance from the far
 Haunt of solitude's retreat.
 Welcome at each Christmas time
 Gay with gifts and candle gleams,
 And to all our pleasures here
 Add the charm of forest dreams.
 Bring the quiet calm you learned
 Steeped in stillness of the wood,
 Heighten joy with peace you knew
 Mantled in your snowy hood.

AT CHRISTMAS TIME

There is so much at Christmas
 To make the season gay;
 The gifts of kind remembrance
 Kept secret for this day,
 The cheerful wreath of holly,
 A sprig of mistletoe,
 The candles on the mantel
 That shed their welcome glow.
 But more than gleam of tinsel
 Or fragrance of the fir,
 There is within the Yuletide
 That sets our hearts astir;
 There is that friendly feeling
 That seems to overflow
 And make folk gay and happy
 Wherever one may go.
 Somehow at this glad season,
 We understand for sure
 That earth holds more of heaven
 Than we have known before,
 And gifts that hearts can offer
 Of love and goodly cheer,
 We prize above all others
 When Christmas time is here.

THE NIGHT AFTER CHRISTMAS

The gorgeous doll that Santa brought,
Reposes quite alone,
In solitary splendor like
A queen upon her throne.

Her eyes are of a heav'nly blue,
And golden are her locks,
And swanky does she look in one
Of fashion's latest frocks.

And there within her cozy room,
Our darling lies asleep,
She'll never know if you and I
Take just a little peep.

In fond embrace she clasps the doll
She takes each night to bed,
Sweet Jane who once was fair to see,
Whose charms, alas, have fled.

Jane's wardrobe is a sight to see,
She only has one ear,
Her hair has grown so very thin,
She'll soon be bald, I fear.

She can't say mama any more,
I guess she's lost her breath;
Her mistress thinks the new doll's swell,
But loves dear Jane to death.

YULETIDE RETROSPECT

Take down the tinsel, wrap up the lights, sweep up the needles, gone are the nights, when from the windows, shone the bright glow, of gleams a sparkle, over the snow. Holidays fleeting, soon fly away, though glad our greeting, for a brief day. Gifts are sweet tokens, but better far—songs of a manger, tales of a star. Happy the season, when for a time, folks are so kindly, something sublime, gift of the angels, leavens our hearts, sweetens our natures, good will imparts.

ALONG THE WAY

OUR HEROES OF BATAAN

Say not that these have fought in vain
Upon that distant shore—
A few square miles of earth are lost,
But they have won much more:
A name for valor that shall shine
Wherever are retold
The deeds of men who feel the flame
That makes the spirit bold.

And now must we with sterner might
Unite our strength as one
'Til victory shall crown the fight
They have so well begun;
For they have stirred in all our hearts
The will to battle on
And prove that we are worthy of
The heroes of Bataan.

PRIORITY IN PRAYER

Today from countless hearts beset by fears
Are lifted prayers, untutored it may be,
Not couched in polished phrases for mens' ears,
But understood by Him who hears each plea.
The trembling prayers of mothers in the night
Entreating for the safety of a son,
Outrank in heaven, like the widow's mite,
The learned words of many a wiser one.

Where threat may lurk within each jungle tree,
In foxholes where men hide from flaming death,
From parching lips of castaways at sea,
Rise prayers upborne by each remaining breath;
And He who holds the fate within His hands
Of men and warring nations everywhere,
Bends low to hear each word and understands,
And grants to these priority in prayer.