

Spring on the Prairie

And the fields grew green
With the mighty mystery
Of springing grain;
The poplar trees burst into yellow leaf,
The oak leaves pricked like a squirrel's ear
And in the mellow grounds the planter strode;
The birds paired off and nested,
The horses fed on the sunny slopes
Where the crocus bloomed and the early grasses
Yielded their sweets to the cattle's lips;
And like some peerless overture, the vast
Sweet symphony the wild chickens sang at dawn
Died away to a single note,
And genial spring was merged in sultry summer.

A Summer Mood

Oh, to be lost in the wind and the sun,
To be one with the wind and the stream!
With never a care while the waters run,
With never a thought in my dream.
To be part of the robin's lilting call
And part of the bobolink's rhyme.
Lying close to the shy thrush singing alone,
And lapped in the cricket's chime!

Oh, to live with these beautiful ones!
With the lust and the glory of man
Lost in the circuit of springtime suns —
Submissive as earth and part of her plan;
To lie as the snake lies, content in the grass!
To drift as the clouds drift, effortless, free,
Glad of the power that drives them on,
With never a question of wind or sea.

Boyish Sleep

And all night long we lie in sleep,
Too sweet to sigh in, or to dream,
Unnoting how the wild winds sweep,
Or snow clouds through the darkness stream
Above the trees that moan and sigh
And clutch with naked hands the sky.
Beneath the checkered counterpane
We rest the soundlier for the storm;
Its wrath is only lullaby,
A far off, vast and dim refrain.

Dreams of the Grass

O! to lie in long grasses!
O! to dream on the plain!
Where the west wind sings as it passes,
A weird and unceasing refrain!
Where the rank grass tosses and wallows,
And the plain's rim dazzles the eye
Where hardly a silver cloud bosses
The flashing steel shield of the sky!
To watch the gay gulls as they glitter
Like snowflakes, and fall from on high
To dip in the deeps of the prairie;
Where the crows foot tosses awry,
Like the swirl o' swift waltzers in glee,
To the harsh, shrill creak of the cricket
And the song of the lark and the bee!

Mounting

I mount and mount toward the sky,
The eagle's heart is mine,
I ride to put the clouds a-by
Where silver lakelets shine.
The roaring streams wax white with snow,
The eagle's nest draws near,
The blue sky widens, hid peaks glow,
The air is frosty clear.
And so from cliff to cliff I rise,
The eagle's heart is mine;
Above me ever broadening skies,
Below the rivers shine.

Settlers

Above them soars a dazzling sky,
In winter blue and clear as steel,
In summer like an arctic sea,
Wherein great icebergs drift and reel
And melt like sudden sorcery;
Beneath them plains stretch far and fair,
Rich with sunlight and with rain;
Vast harvests ripen with their care
And fill with overplus of grain
Their square great bins;
Yet still they strive! I see them rise
At dawn-light going forth to toil;
The same salt sweat has filled my eyes;
My feet have trod the self-same soil behind the snarling share.

The Greeting of the Roses

We had been long in mountain snow,
In valleys bleak, and broad, and bare,
Where only moss and willows grow,
And no bird wings the silent air.
And so when on our downward way,
Wild roses met us, we were glad,
They were so girlish fair, so gay,
It seemed the sun had made them mad.

Relentless Nature

She laid her rivers to snare us,
She set her snows to chill,
Her clouds had the cunning of vultures,
Her plants were charged to kill.
The glooms of her forests benumbed us,
On the slime of her ledges we sprawled;
But we set our feet to the northward,
And crawled and crawled and crawled!
We defied her, and cursed her, and shouted:
"To hell with your rain and your snow.
Our minds we have set on a journey,
And despite of your anger we go!"

The Eagle Trail

From rock-built nest,
The mother eagle, with a threatening tongue,
Utters a warning scream. Her shrill voice rings
Wild as the snow-topped crags she sits among;
While hovering with her quivering wings
Her hungry brood, with eyes ablaze
She watches every shadow. The water calls
Far, far below. The sun's red rays
Ascend the icy, iron walls,
And leap beyond the mountains in the west,
And over the trail and the eagle's nest
The clear night falls.

A Song of Winds

Winds from the prairies where wild weeds shiver;
Winds from the popple trees' quick leaves' quiver,
Where the blithe chickens boom and shrill frogs chime
O winds from my boyhood's far-away time,
I wait for you, long for you, here in the town!
Filled with the memory of grasses and trees,
I long for my prairies as a sailor loves seas;
I hear in red mornings the wild chickens calling,
I hear at still nooning the bugle note falling
From crane sweeping by in the fathomless sky.
I long, oh! I long to lie in the stubble,
Close by the creek, where the cool waters bubble;
Longing to lose in a dream all my care,
Feeling the summer winds kissing my hair,
Hearing the willows shake over my head!

The Meadow Lark

Brave little bird that fears not God,
A voice that breaks from the snow-wet clod
With prophecy of sunny sod,
Set thick with wind-waved golden-rod.

From the first bare clod in the raw cold spring,
From the last bare clod, when fall winds sting,
The farm-boy hears his brave song ring,
And work for the time is a pleasant thing.

The Clouds

Circling the mountains the gray clouds go
Heavy with storms as a mother with child,
Seeking release from their burden of snow
With calm slow motion they cross the wild—
Stately and somber, they catch and cling
To the barren crags of the peaks in the west,
Weary with waiting, and mad for rest.

Pioneers

THEY rise to mastery of wind and snow;
They go like soldiers grimly into strife
To colonize the plain. They plow and sow,
And fertilize the sod with their own life,
As did the Indian and the buffalo.