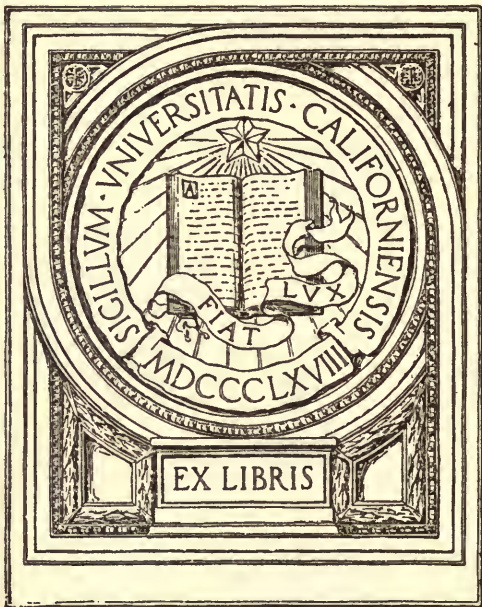




Sunflowers

A Book of
Kansas
Poems

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES




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SUNFLOWERS






SUNFLOWERS

*A Book
of*
KANSAS
POEMS



*Selected
by*
WILLARD
WATTLES

CHICAGO
A. C. McCLURG
& CO. 1916



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1916

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Acknowledgments

12-29-30
C I am indebted to Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, and to Mitchell Kennerley of New York City for permission to use Lindsay's *Kansas* from *The Forum* and from *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty*. To *Smart Set* for Harry Kemp's *Kansas and London*, and for my poem, *Manhood*. To *Harper's Weekly* for my *Sunflowers*. To *The Independent* for my *Carrie Nation*.

12-1-31
C To Mr. A. G. Allerton of Hamlin, Kansas, I owe permission to use the poems of Ellen P. Allerton. Mr. Charles H. Manley of Junction City, Kansas, has allowed the use of the poems of Amanda T. Jones, all four of which originally appeared in the *Century Magazine*.

12-3-31
C I use *Funston* by James J. Montague as it originally appeared in the *New York American*. To C. L. Edson I am indebted for sixteen poems from *The Kansas City Star* and *The New York Evening Mail*; to the *American Magazine* for Edson's *The Promise of Bread*. My own Kansas verse has appeared in *The University Kansan*, *The Graduate Magazine*, *The Journal-World*, *The Topeka Capital*, and *The Springfield Republican*.

W. W.




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Preface to First Edition

To the people of Kansas I dedicate the labor of five years; not mine alone, but that of a group of friends who have equally given of their time to this little volume. At first, my only intention was to collect the lyric verse of living Kansas writers; but as the conception grew, it seemed possible to include the work of earlier men and women who had sensed the significance of our state—and the relatives of those early authors have added their assistance to that of my other friends.

Yet, in no way is this collection to be regarded as a complete anthology of Kansas verse. My earlier intention has restricted my choice to such poems as seem to be especially interpretative of the state, in the way Miss Esther M. Clark's *Call of Kansas* is interpretative. I have for that reason omitted some of our finest Kansas poetry, such as Eugene F. Ware's famous *Washerwoman's Song*,* for others of his poems which are especially local in their appeal. Believing that provincialism is as much of an essential in literature as it is a bane in morality, I have chosen those poems that smack unmistakably of our Kansas soil and are close to the grass-roots. It will be the task of some other laborer, when our literature shall have been more completely written, to

* Included in the new edition.



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garner in future harvest-fields the richest of our grain.

That day I believe will come. Much more has already been done than many of us realize. A host of devoted men and women, among them Richard Realf, Ellen Allerton, and Amanda T. Jones, not forgetting that New England champion of our early liberties, John G. Whittier, has already set the name of Kansas in "song and oratory." I need not mention the names of Paine, Ingalls, Mason, Ware, White, Howe, Morgan, Harger, McCarter, and Carruth.

Are these all? There is even now a younger group, and among them Harry Kemp, Esther M. Clark, Margaret Lynn, and C. L. Edson, now of the *New York Evening Mail*. What they are doing is known beyond the barb wire fences of our state. Another westerner, though not a native, has interpreted the message and significance of Kansas, and is already acknowledged as a vital minister of the Gospel of Beauty and Democracy. To Mr. Nicholas Vachel Lindsay are due the thanks of the State of Kansas as well as the thanks of America for his even broader service. After Walt Whitman, Harry Kemp, Lindsay, and Witter Bynner, may be looked to as the staunchest servants of an Ideal Commonwealth among the poets of America. It has been my privilege to know the three now living, and through John Burroughs to know the master of them all. Except for the encouragement of such men, and of William




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Herbert Carruth and William Hayes Ward, veteran editor of *The Independent*, I doubt if this collection would have been possible.

To three friends I owe a special debt. In 1911, Harry Kemp was one of a group of six at the University of Kansas to publish a volume called *Songs from the Hill*. At that time, in our pardonable enthusiasm, we argued that, since the centers of American literature had moved in the past from New York in the days of Irving and Cooper to New England in the days of Hawthorne and Emerson; thence in a later day to Indiana and Chicago; overlooking the fact that California has developed a literature of her own, that the next logical camping place of the muses should be on the banks of the "Kaw," as we euphoniouly christen our muddy Kansas river. After living for three years in New England, I am not so certain that we were entirely wrong. "If that be treason, make the most of it." Certainly, I shall feel that this little book is in some way the fulfillment of that enthusiastic vision of Harry Kemp.

Two years ago, while Kemp was at Helmetta, New Jersey, he wrote at my request a poem *Kansas* which I print in this volume as the feature poem. The poem is already known to the state through the newspapers, but I have the privilege of giving it the first permanent publication. I received yesterday from New York the following telegram from Kemp in regard to the poem: "Yes, I wrote it for you."



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Without the aid of Miss Esther M. Clark this book could not have been prepared. She has written letters, prepared my copy, and helped to read my proof. I cannot sufficiently thank her. I can do it best in verse.

To Ivan Shuler, my friend and schoolmate, I am indebted for the drawings * on which he spent three years of patient labor. He, like myself, was reared on a Kansas farm, and is peculiarly fitted by that inheritance as well as by his training in the art institutes of Chicago and New York, to interpret the spirit of Kansas. It is my highest hope that this book will bring him the recognition he deserves. Julian Street has said in *Collier's Weekly* that Kansas has little or no original Kansas art — and Julian Street is more or less right. Julian Street is a journalist and his business is to report facts as he finds them. But if I may play the prophet as he the reporter, I would answer all critics of a raw and crude civilization such as is unquestionably ours in aesthetic matters, in the words of Harry Kemp:

“Let other countries glory in their Past,
But Kansas glories in her days to be.”

But now to the people of Kansas I must say, “That depends on us” — on every Kansan whose duty it is to support the cultural and educative institutions of

* Omitted from second edition on account of change of format.



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his state, to bring to the consideration of public questions a mind unswayed by provincialism or fanaticism, with the simultaneous obligation of not forgetting, when that culture shall have been attained, that the source of strength and beauty alike is in the soil from which we spring. Whenever a culture goes to seed at the top, it becomes a menace to society; and if the choice were given me of seeing in Kansas what I have seen of culture in another section of America—and I do not mean New England—I should say, “Culture be hanged—give me the prairie-dogs.”

And here I wish to explain that whatever I have said in my own verse in contrasting the East with the West is not leveled at the *people* of the East; for my three years in Amherst, Massachusetts, were three of the happiest and most valuable of my life. In many ways the East is kinder than the West. What I do object to in the East is the *mental provincialism* * of her people, which is as marked as the *aesthetic provincialism* of the West—that sort of attitude on the part of the average easterner which makes him

* August 19, 1916. A good friend of mine from Massachusetts who has just returned with me from two months of harvesting, haying, and ranching in Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, and Nebraska, objects to my saying that easterners are “mentally provincial.” I think we all believe, for that matter, that everywhere “folks is folks,” that when we know a people well enough, differences disappear.

Let East come West, and West go East:
There is room for both at the wedding feast.



look upon the Hudson river as the western boundary of the habitable globe. Fortunately, that attitude is even now changing toward a broader Americanism. There is none of us who need not be reminded that "there is neither East nor West," and that men are not citizens of Kansas or of Manhattan only, but citizens of America, and after that citizens of the world. Not in one generation alone has the query risen, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?"

This book goes from me to the people of Kansas. It is no longer my property. There is on it no copyright.† I shall feel fortunate if I sell enough of these copies to pay my printer, and he is a very good printer, an editor and my friend — Mr. W. C. Simons and Mr. J. L. Brady, for there are two of "him." They, too, have made this collection possible, because they believe in me and in the people of Kansas. These are your poets and your poems. What will you do with them?

WILLARD WATTLES.

Lawrence, Kansas,
October 18, 1914.

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Dedication to Second Edition

Kansas, queen of the golden prairies,
Central heart of the glowing West,
Steadfast love that never varies,
Mother of the ample breast,

We, thy sons and daughters raise thee
Glory and thanksgiving song —
Not on our lips the power to praise thee;
To deeds alone does the right belong.

Born in the faith our fathers cherished,
Circled in girdling walls of fire;
One by one our mothers perished,
Lifting thee nearer the heart's desire.

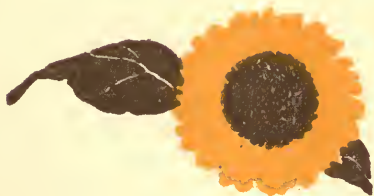
Queen and mother, now renewing
All the pledge of that nobler race,
Strengthen us for the daily doing
Homely things with a cheerful face.



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Not in pride of the wealth you gave us,
Not in boasting of easy tongue;
Only love and labor save us,
Set us high in the stars among.

Willard Wattles





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Preface to Second Edition

That this collection of Kansas poems is entering its second edition is due to the kindness of many Kansans, not the last of whom are the Kansas editors. To W. C. Simons and to William Allen White I am especially indebted for unwavering assistance.

This edition contains a number of additions and corrections. Through permission of *The Smart Set* I use Harry Kemp's poem, *The Harvest Hand*. Mr. C./L. Edson's poem, *Corn*, here receives its first printing in completed form. Mr. Edson's contributions have, to my mind, particular historical value in their local color. I am adding other poems by Rose Morgan, Anne Reece Pugh, and Walt Mason; also four poems by Dorothy Statton, a poet new to the Kansas public and deserving of recognition. The most important single addition is Eugene Ware's *Washerwoman's Song*, about which there have been many inquiries as to why it did not appear in the first edition.

The interest of this book has been local; only those who know our state intimately can know what is in these pages. John Burroughs has told me that our straight roads depress him; "they are laid out like a checker-board." I gave him my *Prairie Wind* and he said, "Perhaps there is some beauty there, after all." The lyric delicacy of our prairie life is some-

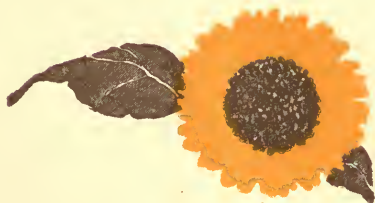


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times overwhelmed in the epic sweep of our plains and our horizons; but it is not lost, only waiting for the wise discoverer. Those who have lived here will know what we have found.

WILLARD WATTLES.

June 8, 1916.





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Kansas

Not for what she hath done for me,
Though it be great,
For what she is, her majesty,
I love my State.

Thomas Emmet Dewey



SUNFLOWERS



The Call of Kansas

Surfeited here with beauty, and the sensuous-sweet
perfume,

Borne in from a thousand gardens and orchards of
orange-bloom;

Awed by the silent mountains, stunned by the
breakers' roar —

The restless ocean pounding and tugging away at
the shore —

I lie on the warm sand-beach and hear, above the
cry of the sea,

The voice of the prairie calling,

Calling me.

Sweeter to me than the salt sea spray, the fragrance
of summer rains;

Nearer my heart than these mighty hills are the
windswept Kansas plains;

Dearer the sight of a shy, wild rose, by the
roadside's dusty way,

Than all the splendor of poppy-fields, ablaze in the
sun of May.



Gay as the bold poinsettia is, and the burden of
pepper trees,
The sunflower, tawny and gold and brown, is richer,
to me, than these.
And rising ever above the song of the hoarse,
insistent sea,
The voice of the prairie calling,
Calling me.

Kansas, beloved Mother, today in an alien
land,
Yours is the name I have idly traced with a bit of
wood in the sand,
The name that flung from a scornful lip will make
the hot blood start;
The name that is graven, hard and deep, on the core
of my loyal heart.
O, higher, clearer and stronger yet, than the boom
of the savage sea,
The voice of the prairie calling,
Calling me.

Esther M. Clark



Kansas

Let other countries glory in their Past,
But Kansas glories in her days to be,
In her horizons limitless and vast,
Her plains that storm the senses like the sea;
She has no ruins gray that men revere—
Her Time is "Now," Her Heritage is "Here."

Harry Kemp

Morning in Kansas

There are lands beyond the ocean which are gray beneath their years, where a hundred generations learned to sow and reap and spin; where the sons of Shem and Japhet wet the furrow with their tears—and the noontide is departed, and the night is closing in.

Long ago the shadows lengthened in the lands across the sea, and the dusk is now enshrouding regions nearer home, alas! There are long deserted homesteads in this country of the free—but it's morning here in Kansas, and the dew is on the grass.

It is morning here in Kansas, and the breakfast bell is rung! We are not yet fairly started



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on the work we mean to do; we have all day before us, for the morning is but young, and there's hope in every zephyr, and the skies are bright and blue.

It is morning here in Kansas, and the dew is on the sod; as the builders of an empire it is ours to do our best; with our hands at work in Kansas, and our faith and trust in God, we shall not be counted idle when the sun sinks in the West.

Walt Mason

Three States

Of all the states, but three will live in story;
Old Massachusetts with her Plymouth Rock,
And old Virginia with her noble stock,
And Sunny Kansas with her woes and glory;
These three will live in song and oratory,
While all the others, with their idle claims,
Will only be remembered as mere names.

Eugene F. Ware



SUNFLOWERS

Kansas and London

Where the vast and cloudless sky was broken by one
crow

I sat upon a hill—all alone—long ago,
But I never felt so lonely and so out of God's way
As here, where I brush elbows with a thousand
every day.

Harry Kemp

Opportunity

Master of human destinies am I!
Fame, love, and fortune on my footsteps wait.
Cities and fields I walk; I penetrate
Deserts and seas remote, and passing by
Hovel and mart and palace, soon or late
I knock unbidden once at every gate!
If sleeping, wake; if feasting, rise before
I turn away. It is the hour of fate,
And they who follow me reach every state
Mortals desire, and conquer every foe
Save death; but those who doubt or hesitate,
Condemned to failure, penury, and woe,
Seek me in vain and uselessly implore;
I answer not, and I return no more.

John J. Ingalls



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Each in His Own Tongue

A fire-mist and a planet,
A crystal and a cell,
A jellyfish and a saurian,
And caves where the cavemen dwell;
Then a sense of law and beauty
And a face turned from the clod —
Some call it Evolution,
And others call it God.

A haze on the far horizon,
The infinite, tender sky,
The ripe, rich tints of the cornfields,
And the wild geese sailing high;
And all over upland and lowland,
The charm of the goldenrod —
Some of us call it Autumn,
And others call it God.

Like tides on a crescent sea-beach,
When the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings
Come welling and surging in:
Come from the mystic ocean
Whose rim no foot has trod —
Some of us call it Longing,
And others call it God.



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A picket frozen on duty,
A mother starved for her brood,
Socrates drinking the hemlock,
And Jesus on the rood;
And millions who, humble and nameless,
The straight, hard pathway plod —
Some call it Consecration,
And others call it God.

William Herbert Carruth

Kansas

O, I have walked in Kansas
Through many a harvest field
And piled the sheaves of glory there
And down the wild rows reeled:

Each sheaf a little yellow sun,
A heap of hot-rayed gold;
Each binder like Creation's hand
To mould suns, as of old.

Straight overhead the orb of noon
Beat down with brimstone breath;
The desert wind from south and west
Was blistering flame and death.



Yet it was gay in Kansas,
A-fighting that strong sun;
And I and many a fellow-tramp
Defied that wind and won.

And we felt free in Kansas
From any sort of fear,
For thirty thousand tramps like us
There harvest every year.

She stretches arms for them to come,
She roars for helpers then,
And so it is in Kansas
That tramps, one month, are men.

We sang in burning Kansas
The songs of Sabbath-school,
The "Day-Star" flashing in the East,
The "Vale of Eden" cool.

We sang in splendid Kansas
"The flag that set us free"—
That march of fifty thousand men
With Sherman-to the sea.

We feasted high in Kansas
And had much milk and meat.
The tables groaned to give us power
Wherewith to save the wheat.



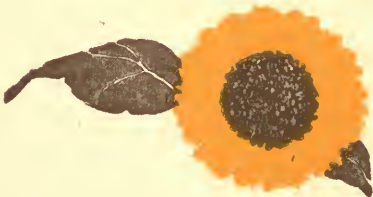
Our beds were sweet alfalfa hay
Within the barn-loft wide.
The loft-doors opened out upon
The endless wheat-field tide.

I loved to watch the wind-mills spin
And watch that big moon rise.
I dreamed and dreamed with lids half-shut,
The moonlight in my eyes.

For all men dream in Kansas,
By noonday and by night,
By sunrise yellow, red and wild,
And moonrise wild and white.

The wind would drive the glittering clouds,
The cottonwoods would croon,
And past the sheaves and through the leaves
Came whispers from the moon.

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay






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When the Sunflowers Bloom

I've been off on a journey; I jes' got home today;
I traveled east, an' north, an' south, an' every other
way;
I seen a heap of country, an' cities on the boom,
But I want to be in Kansas when the
Sun-
Flowers
Bloom.

You may talk about yer lilies, yer vi'lets and yer
roses,
Yer asters, an' yer jassymins, an' all the other
posies;
I'll allow they all air beauties an' full 'er sweet
perfume,
But there's none of them a patchin' to the
Sun-
Flower's
Bloom.

Oh, it's nice among the mount'ins, but I sorter felt
shet in;
'Tud be nice upon the seashore ef it wasn't for the
din;
While the prairies air so quiet, an' there's allers
lots o' room,



SUNFLOWERS

Oh, it's nicer still in Kansas when the
Sun-
Flowers
Bloom.

When all the sky above is jest ez blue ez blue
kin be,
An' the prairies air a wavin' like a yaller driftin'
sea,
Oh, it's there my soul goes sailin' an' my heart is
on the boom
In the golden fields of Kansas when the
Sun-
Flowers
Bloom.

Albert Bigelow Paine

We'll Be Going on Again

We've footed it so far today across the pathless
plain,
And down the hills, across the vales, and up the
hills again,
And through a forest green and dark, where turtle-
doves were mourning —
So we are glad to stay, tonight,
And share your food and your lamplight;
But we'll be going on again in the morning,
We'll be going on — in the morning.



SUNFLOWERS

We've watched the morning, on the plain, rise, robed
in floating gold,
And in the hills we've seen the twilight, purple-
mantled, starry, cold;
And in the forest oft at night we've heard the skies
a-storming —
And we are glad to rest our heads
Sometime, somewhere, upon your beds;
But we'll be going on again in the morning,
We'll be going on — in the morning.

We've seen the winter cross the land, its veils of
white a-trailing,
We've seen the pink buds all awake when pearly
clouds were sailing;
We've seen the wide fields parched and dead, when
glowed the August noon,
And purple grapes, and scarlet leaves, beneath the
harvest moon —
We've seen them many times before —
We hope to see them many more;
And we'll be going on again in the morning,
We'll be going on — in the morning.

Dorothy Statton



SUNFLOWERS

It Will Be a Kansas Year

O, the Lord's come back to Kansas and will start
the brooklets flowing,

Put new life in the people, keep the vegetation
growing.

So just keep the hoe a-shining, put your muscles
into gear,

For the Lord's come back to Kansas and 'twill be
a Kansas year.

Yes, the Lord's come back to Kansas, to give music
to the birds;

Sent the silver dews to moisten early grazing for
the herds;

So just plant and keep on planting; every stalk
will bear an ear;

For the Lord's come back to Kansas, and 'twill be
a Kansas year.

Yes, the Lord's come back to Kansas; 'twill put
blue stem in the sod;

And the humming bird will flutter midst the
autumn's goldenrod;

So get out the scythe and whet it, haying season's
almost here;

For the Lord's come back to Kansas and 'twill be
a Kansas year.

J. B. Edson



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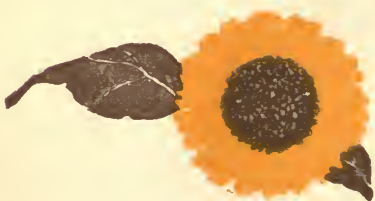
Joy in the Corn Belt

The seed is in the clover,
The ear is in the shuck,
The melons shout, "Come out, come out,
And eat this garden-truck."

The yellow ears are for the steers,
The white are for the swine;
Their hair and hides and bacon sides
Are all for me and mine.

The cider mug is by its jug,
The sweet potatoes fry;
And ma is shovin' in the oven
Pumpkin custard pie!

C. L. Edson





Walls of Corn

Smiling and beautiful, heaven's dome,
Bends softly over our prairie home.

But the wide, wide lands that stretched away
Before my eyes in the days of May,

The rolling prairies' billowy swell,
Breezy upland and timbered dell,

Stately mansion and hut forlorn,
All are hidden by walls of corn.

All wide the world is narrowed down,
To the walls of corn, now sere and brown.

What do they hold — these walls of corn,
Whose banners toss on the breeze of morn?

He who questions may soon be told;
A great state's wealth these walls enfold.

No sentinels guard these walls of corn,
Never is sounded the warder's horn.

Yet the pillars are hung with gleaming gold,
Left all unbarred, though thieves are bold.

Clothes and food for the toiling poor,
Wealth to heap at the rich man's door;



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Meat for the healthy and balm for him
Who moans and tosses in chamber dim;

Shoes for the barefooted, pearls to twine
In the scented tresses of ladies fine;

Things of use for the lowly cot,
Where (bless the corn!) want cometh not;

Luxuries rare for the mansion grand,
Gifts of a rich and fertile land —

All these things and so many more
It would fill a book to name them o'er,

Are hid and held in these walls of corn,
Whose banners toss in the breeze of morn.


Open the atlas, conned by rule,
In the olden days of the district school.

Point to the rich and bounteous land,
That yields such fruit to the toiler's hand.

"Treeless desert," they called it then,
Haunted by beasts, forsaken by men.

Little they knew what wealth untold,
Lay hid where the desolate prairies rolled.

Who would have dared, with brush or pen,
As this land is now, to paint it then?



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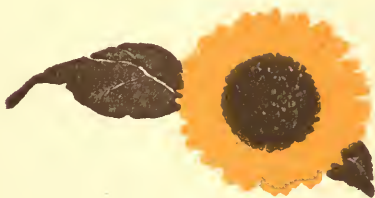
And how would the wise ones have laughed in
scorn,
Had prophet foretold these walls of corn,
Whose banners toss in the breeze of morn!

Ellen P. Allerton

Ah! Sunflower!

Ah! Sunflower, weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun,
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveler's journey is done;
Where the youth pined away with desire,
And the pale virgin shrouded in snow,
Arise from their graves, and aspire
Where my sunflower wishes to go!

William Blake





SUNFLOWERS

Winds of Delphic Kansas

Half-west, half-east; half-north, half-south;
— As in Grecian Delphi in days of old,
The center of the world as men then told —
The winds blow ever — and through a god's mouth.

O, the snow-footed, ice-armored winds of the prairie,
Rushing out mightily
From cosmic caves of the north,
From glacier forces of earth and air,
The winter winds of the prairie!
They drive dark clouds from morn to morn,
They shake the light o'er stubbles of corn,
They whistle through woods of leaves all shorn,
With never a hint of the spring to be born,
The flesh-freezing winds of the prairie!

Half-north, half-south; half-east, half-west;
The airs pour ever; the winds never rest:

O, the sun-lifted, cotton-soft winds of the prairie,
Cheering right merrily
From tillage lands of the south,
From warmth of breeding southern seas,
The June-sweet winds of the prairie!
They drive silver clouds all day to its close,
And shake glowing light on young corn in rows,



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They rock the trees till the small birds drowse,
They swirl the fragrance of wild-grape and rose,
The seminal winds of the prairie!

Half-south, half-north; half-west, half-east:
A people intoxicate; and winds do not cease;

O, the free-state, Puritan-spirited winds of the
prairie,

Singing right heartily

That gods were but folk who were free,
That folk who are free are as gods,

The human-voiced winds of the prairie.

They call Brown of bloody-blade from Osawatomie,
They smite swift the shackles — the slave is free;
To all the world they say in their humanity
“Come here and build a home loyal to me,”

The primal-souled winds of the prairie!

Half-east, half-west; half-south, half-north;
All forces here meet, but the free alone are worth;

O, the self-reliant, right-seeking winds of the prairie,
Blowing out lustily

From the race-brood of New England

In this western New England.

The altruistic, rainbow-future winds of the prairie!
They strive ever after the ideal — Better! Better!
Till today they sing “Melior! Brook no fetter!



Of freedom the spirit seek ye; not the letter!
Melior! Melior! Better! Better!"

The cloud-dispelling, star-climbing winds of the
prairie!

So, prophetic in zeal, through hot winds and cold,
— As in Grecian Delphi in days of old,
The center of the world as men then told —
Half-west, half-east; half-north, half-south —
The spirit speaks ever — and through a god's mouth.

Kate Stephens

Wind in the Treetops

Treetops, and wind in the treetops,
And a cloud-dappled bit of blue sky
With a bird swift across it flight winging,
Are all I can see, as I lie
In my narrow white bed — but the wonder,
The glory, the beauty — are there,
And I feel like a bird in its aerie,
A prince of the kingdom of air.

Treetops, and wind in the treetops,
And moonshine, so mystic and pale,
That the eye of some star far above it
Peers soft through a gossamer veil;



SUNFLOWERS

And far down the shadowy distance
A sleepy bird chirps in its dream
'Til out 'neath the star-powdered heavens
Afloat on swift pinions I seem.

Out, out in the mist and the moonshine,
Out, out o'er the slumbering world,
On, on to the end of the darkness
Where the banners of dawn are unfurled;
'Til I see, gleaming forth from night's window
One great red-gold lamp of the sky, -
While along the gray east, serried cloud banks
Wind-routed, tumultuously fly.

“Treetops, and wind in the treetops!”
You say — and you pity me so —
Pity me — before whom such a pageant
E'er passes so grandly and slow.
'Til I smile in my pain, and forgetting
The poor ailing body's control,
See treetops, and wind in the treetops
And myself an emancipate soul!

Louisa Cooke Don-Carlos




SUNFLOWERS

Le Marais Du Cygne

A blush as of roses
Where rose never grew!
Great drops on the bunch-grass,
But not of the dew!
A taint in the sweet air
For wild bees to shun,
A stain that shall never
Bleach out in the sun!

Back, steed of the prairies!
Sweet song-bird, fly back!
Wheel hither, bald vulture.
Gray wolf, call thy pack!
The foul human vultures
Have feasted and fled;
The wolves of the Border
Have crept from the dead.

In the homes of their rearing,
Yet warm with their lives,
Ye wait the dead only,
Poor children and wives!
Put out the red forge-fire,
The smith shall not come;
Unyoke the brown oxen,
The plowman lies dumb.



SUNFLOWERS

Wind slow from the Swan's Marsh,
O dreary death-train,
With pressed lips as bloodless
As lips of the slain!
Kiss down the young eyelids,
Smooth down the gray hairs;
Let tears quench the curses
That burn through your prayers.

From the hearths of their cabins,
The fields of their corn,
Unwarned and unweaponed,
The victims were torn —
By the whirlwind of murder
Swooped up and swept on
To the low, reedy fen-lands,
The Marsh of the Swan.

With a vain plea for mercy
No stout knee was crooked;
In the mouths of their rifles
Right manly they looked.
How pale the May sunshine,
Green Marais du Cygne,
When the death-smoke blew over
Thy lonely ravine!

Strong man of the prairies,
Mourn bitter and wild!



SUNFLOWERS

Wail, desolate woman!
 Weep, fatherless child!
But the grain of God springs up
 From ashes beneath,
And the crown of His harvest
 Is life out of death.

Not in vain on the dial
 The shade moves along
To point the great contrasts
 Of right and of wrong:
Free prairie and flood —
 And fields of ripe food;
The reeds of the Swan's Marsh
 Where bloom is of blood.

On the lintels of Kansas
 That blood shall not dry;
Henceforth the Bad Angel
 Shall harmless go by;
Henceforth to the sunset
 Unchecked on her way,
Shall Liberty follow
 The march of the day.

John G. Whittier,



SUNFLOWERS

The Prairie Pioneers

He builded a house of sod on the slope of a prairie
knoll;

He builded in praise of God, content with the scanty
dole.

He had builded a nest in the grass, as the ground-
squirrels burrow low;

And hither he led a laughing lass in the days of
long ago.

He was a lad and she was a maid;

Their hearts were glad; they were unafraid

Of the world and its waiting woe.

The prairie wind in her face tumbled her tresses
down,

The sensitive rose, in its grace, clung to her cotton
gown.

The prairie dog beat a retreat and watched them
mournful-eyed,

And the buffalo-grass beneath her feet said, "Woe
to the prairie bride!"

He was a husband she was a wife;

A foot in the daisy fields of life;

They would not be denied.

Who did the law ordain, who wrote the dread
decree



SUNFLOWERS

That into the desert plain the children of men
should flee?

Into a treeless land, the land of little rain,
Pressed and driven by penury's hand, shackled with
poverty's chain;

Youth to sicken and love to die,
Beauty blasted and hope gone dry,
And grief in a maddened brain.

Ever the hot wind blew, sapping the famished corn;
The night, unblessed by dew, fevered the breath of
morn.

A man agape at the skies where no cloud fleeces go;
Weeping, the broken woman lies in the dugout's
furnace glow.

His hope, like the sod corn, curls and wilts;
She writhes on a bed of cotton quilts
In a mother's nameless woe.

O, wind, you are hellish hot; death is the song you
sing;

The eggs in the quail's nest rot under her tortured
wing.

Dust in a choking cloud wavers and sifts and flies;
Dust is the dead babe's pauper shroud; on her sick
breast it lies.

The sod corn crumbles and blows away,
Chaff in the clouds of smoking clay,
Surging against the skies;



SUNFLOWERS

He builded a house of sod on the slope of a prairie
knoll ;

He builded in praise of God, content with the scanty
dole.

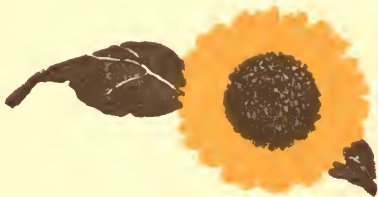
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He was a lad and she was a maid ;

Their hearts were glad ; they were unafraid ,
Of the world and its waiting woe.

C. L. Edson





SUNFLOWERS

Chewink

Sing me another solo, sweet —

I have learnt this one by rote;
The endless merry-go-round repeat
Of the tuneful, tender, teasing note:
“Che-wink, che-wink!
Che-wink, che-wink!”


A moment's rest for the tired throat
(Just long enough for a heart to beat),
And at it again: “Che-wink, che-wink.”

O bird, dear bird, with the outspread wings
And little to chant about! —
When death reaches over the wreck of things
To stifle the soft, delighted shout:
“Che-wink, che-wink!
Che-wink, che-wink!”

And, all unruffled by dread or doubt,
Your musical mite of a soul upsprings,
Will you still go crying: “Che-wink, che-wink?”

Little I know, but this I hold:
If the rushing stars should meet —
Their crystal spheres into chaos rolled —
Let only this one pure voice entreat:
“Che-wink, che-wink!
Che-wink che-wink!”

Great Love would answer the summons sweet,



SUNFLOWERS

And a universe fresh as the rose unfold.
So at it again. "Che-wink, che-wink!"
Amanda T. Jones

Spring in Kansas

Make glad, make glad,
The Lord of growth has come,
The sun has half his northward journey done,
And in deep-buried roots moves the Spirit!

Upon the dark-earthed field
Fires of last year's husks the farmer kindles —
Sacrifices to the Lord of growth;
Smoke rises to the bluer heavens,
While hawk and solemn crow cut with long wing the
sparkling air,
And little birds do sing "Rejoice!
Rejoice! the springing life is here!"

For the sun, O brothers, shines upon our land!
And winds, O sisters, blow over all our land!
Mounting sap now brightens trunk and tree and vine,
And every tip-most twig swells out its leaf-buds:

The peach puts forth her bitter-tinted pink,
Red-bud empurples far each wooded stretch.
And, by the magic of the lord of spring,



SUNFLOWERS

Stand orchards, very ghosts of winter snows, white-
cloaked in blossom.

And wheat, O sisters, greens in our rolling glebe,
And corn, O brothers, springs from its golden seed!
For sun-warmth and wind-strength and praise-God
rain are abroad in our land,
Three builders of worlds with the Spirit go forth
hand in hand.

Make glad, make glad.
The Lord of growth has come,
The sun has near his northward journey run,
And in deep-buried roots moves Life ever-living!
Kate Stephens

Shri Krishna's Flute

*"The notes of his wondrous flute are heard in all
the groves, and over all the plains."—Avataras.*

Not along the dusty highways,
But in green and leaf-walled byways,
Sometimes in the early dawning
I have heard his silv'ry flute.
Or when evening's purple's falling,
And the village bullock's calling;
'Mid the noises of the jungle
Monkey's cry and owl's hoot.



SUNFLOWERS

Where the lotus buds are sleeping
In the depth of Gunga's keeping.
And the trunked Ganesh's shadow
Looms across the temple door.
Carved with gods and smoked with incense,
E'er the morning's mantrams commence,
And the people bring their offerings,
I have heard it once — before.

Faint and clear and low and pleading,
Full of laughter, full of tears,
Full of lust of woman's beauty,
Strength of days and length of years.
In it whispers all the brooding
Of the nesting birds in June,
All the mystery of the jungle
Rustling 'neath the great orb'd moon.

Full of plaint of bearing mother,
Full of sigh of trembling bride.
Chants in incense dimmed temples
Love songs 'neath the night-skies wide.
In it thrills the cry of mourners
'Round the ghats at waterside,
And the talk of village elders
'Neath the palm at eventide.

“Naught is thee or me,” it whispers,
“A U M — from form set free.”



SUNFLOWERS

Back the water-drops go slipping,
Thankfully into the sea."
"Naught is high or low," it murmurs,
"Man or Deva, bound or free.
Each but strand of that great Cordon
Stretching through eternity."

Not along the dusty highways,
But in green and leaf-walled byways,
Sometimes have I glimpsed Lord Krishna
While the listening birds sat mute.
With his eyes like stars a-shining,
Leafy girdle 'round him twining;
And with pouting lips of scarlet
Prest against his wondrous flute.

Louisa Cooke Don-Carlos

The Prairie Schooner

Slow was the weary, toilsome way
Where creaked the heavy-laden wain —
Quaint follower of the speeding day
Across the plain.

White canvas covers, bulging, fair,
Enclosed fond hearts athrob with joy;
The builders of an empire there
Found safe convoy.



SUNFLOWERS

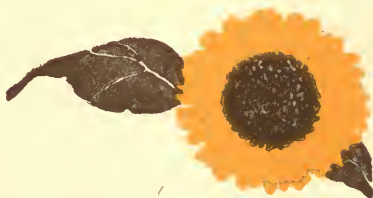
Along its course child-voices sweet
 Marked all the strangeness of each scene;
While parents sought new homes to greet
 With vision keen.

No luxury or ease was there
 To lap the traveler into rest,
But staunch it bore the pioneer
 On toward the West.

Deserted now, its ragged sails
 Are furled — the port has long been won.
Sport of the boisterous, hurrying gales,
 Through cloud and sun.

Unused, forlorn, and gray, it stands,
 A faded wreck cast far ashore,
The Mayflower of the prairie lands,
 Its journey o'er.

Charles Moreau Harger





Good-bye to the Cottonwood

On the cottonwood tree rests the shadow of doom,
The useless old tree with its feathery bloom
Blowing widely adrift like the scattering snow,
Falling mutely in heaps, wind-swept to and fro,
 The hardy old tree,
 The pioneer tree,
Through years that are gone
 It waited a hand
 To conquer the land,
And its people in triumph lead on, ever on.

When the tender young elm and the maple tree gay,
When the poplar and oak withered down in dismay
At the hot brazen heavens of sweltering June,
And the breath of July like the desert simoon,
 Then alkali soil,
 Then dry barren soil,
It felt the firm grasp
 Of roots that were strong
 Seeking waters among
The low hidden deeps that the cool fountains clasp.

On the young settler's "homestead" first planted
 with grain
From the hard skies it courted the life-giving rain.
O'er the first little dugout its soft shadows crept,



SUNFLOWERS

To its murmuring music the wee babies slept;
And there to its shade,
Its sheltering shade,
Fond lovers would come,
In strange prairie lands
It reached out warm hands
To the hearts that were aching and longing for home.

'Gainst the drouth, and the cyclone, the plague and
the heat

The old cottonwood tree planted firmly its feet.
But at last it must bow. Are my eyes getting dim?

'Tis but sentiment surely, a woman's soft whim
That would keep to the last
This old tree of the past,

As the memories we keep
Of the men who stood firm
In the early day storm,

The strong "builders of empire" whose labors we
reap.

Margaret Hill McCarter



SUNFLOWERS

Where "A Lovely Time Was Had"

Bill Hucks, the item-chaser on the *Willer Creek Gayzette*,

Was the likeliestest hustler that old man McCray could get.

As a writer-up of runaways, an' funerals, an' shows, Bill never had an equal, nor a rival, goodness knows. So we sent him up a *invite* to a doin's Susie give, And he writ a piece about it that was fine, as sure's you live.

But all I kin remember is, "We hardly need to add The guests agreed at leaving that a lovely time was had."

O, yes — come now to think of it — her maw cooked up some cake,

And pies and floatin' island truck that Susie helped to make,

And they was pickle-lilly, too, and beets and jell and jam,

And slaw, and chicken-salad, and some sanwiches of ham.

And them Bill said 'was "viands," which, in writin'-up he owned

"Made a tempting feast of good things, and the table fairly groaned.

And when the wee sma' hours were come, we hardly need to add,



SUNFLOWERS

The guests agreed at leaving that a lovely time
was had."

Old Bill has gone from Willer Crick; the *Gayzette*
is no more;

For Old McCray has stole away to find the Golden
Shore.

And Susie has been married off for lo! these many
years,

And some of them that come that night have quit
this vale of tears;

But maw has in her scrap-book —'long with little
Laury's death,

And the pome about the baby and the accident to
Seth —

The piece about the doin's, and today it makes us
glad.

To read at Susie's party "that a lovely time was
had."

William Allen White



Pawpaws Ripe

The sunny plains of Kansas dozed
In soft October haze;
The wayside leaves and grass disclosed
Scarce signs of autumn days.
The cornstalks bent their ears of gold,
To list the cricket's din;
And fields of sprouting wheat foretold
The farmer's laden bin.

Many a mover's caravan
Stretched westward far away,
As they had moved, since spring began,
To where the homesteads lay.
Their wagon-sheets were snowy white,
Their cattle sleek and stout;
Their children's merry faces bright
With blooming health shone out.

But ho! what apparition queer
Is this that looms in sight?
Has Rip Van Winkle wandered here
Just from his waking plight?
Has one of the Lost Tribes come back
With remnant of his band,
And eastward turned once more his track,
To seek the Promised Land?



SUNFLOWERS

Beneath yon shade I'll sit me there,
 Upon that bank of grass,
And inventory, as it were,
 These nomads, as they pass.
There may be reason wise and strong,
 Unknown to us, why they,
Of all the steady, moving throng,
 Are on the backward way.

A wagon of past ages, built
 On model lost to art;
A dirty, ragged, faded quilt
 Supplied a cover's part.
Wheels of four sizes, tireless now,
 With many a missing spoke;
A three-legged mule, a one-horned cow,
 Tugged slowly in the yoke.

A man of five-and-forty years,
 With beard of grizzled brown;
A brimless hat sat on h's ears,
 His hair strayed through the crown;
His pants of dingy butternut,
 His coat of tarnished blue,
His feet with no incumbrance but
 Mismatched boot and shoe.

Six hungry curs of low degree
 Sneaked at their master's heels,




SUNFLOWERS

Or, underneath the axle-tree,
Kept measure with the wheels.
Packed in the feeding-box behind,
A time-worn jug is spied,
Whose corn-cob stopper hints the kind
Of nourishment inside.

Nine boys and girls with rheumy eyes,
Stowed in with beds and tins,
Were all so nearly of a size
They might have well been twins.
The mother, as a penance sore
For loss of youth and hope,
Seemed to have vowed, long years before
To fast from comb and soap.

“Halloo, my friend; a brood like that
Should head the other way;
The land is broad and free, and fat —
Go take it while you may.”
Raising his glazed and dirty sleeve,
He gave his mouth a wipe,
And answered, with a sighing heave,
“Stranger, pawpaws is ripe!

“Don’t tell me of your corn and wheat —
What do I care for sich?
Don’t say your schools is hard to beat,
And Kansas soil is rich.



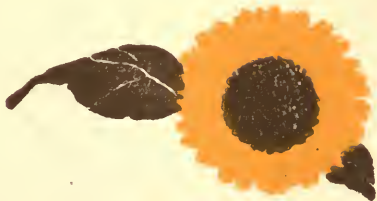
SUNFLOWERS

Stranger, a year's been lost by me,
Searchin' your Kansas siles,
And not a pawpaw did I see,
For miles, and miles, and miles!

"Missouri's good enough for me;
The bottom timber's wide;
The best of livin' there is free,
And spread on every side.
In course, the health ain't good for some,
But we're not of that stripe,
Hey! Bet and Tobe! We're gwien home!
Git up! Pawpaws is ripe!"

He cracked his whip, and off they went,
The mule, and cow, and dogs.
I watched them till they all were blent
With distant haze and fogs;
And as the blue smoke heavenward curled
Up from his corncob pipe,
He dreamed not of that better world,
For here pawpaws were ripe!

Sol Miller






SUNFLOWERS

Kansas *

From the surge of the western ocean and the roaring
of the sea,
From the Land of the Orange Blossom, thy daughter
cried to thee,
"Kansas, beloved Mother;" so I with a heart as
sore
Turn from the wooded hillside and vast Atlantic's
shore
To the wind-swept Kansas prairies and golden seas
of grain,
With as desperate a longing and hands that stretch
as vain.

Not I with the crowded palette of genius-given
art
Crystallize into perfection the yearning of my
heart;
Her's is the sun-kissed rapture, her's is the gift
divine,
Only the blundering phrases of awkwardness are
mine;
And yet from the hills of longing thru severing
leagues between
I cry with the bitter aching of loneliness as keen.

* Dedicated to Esther M. Clark, author of "The Call of
Kansas."



SUNFLOWERS

Manhattan's walls reecho with a million clamoring
cries,
The stars grow wan above her in the glory of her
eyes,
The sea falls down before her like a lover at her
knees,
And rich is she in raiment of his purple argosies —
A queen upon a dais at the gateway of the world,
She is not half so lovely as the Prairie, dewdrop
pearled.

The elms of Boston murmur, with ghostly memories,
And haunting echoes of the past speak still in cul-
tured ease;
But at her heart a grave-yard has festered with
its dead,
A white skull glistens underneath the garlands of
her head;
Across the Kansas prairies, with brown and dusty
feet,
The wind-blown sweetheart of the Sun has gone
her lord to greet.

Not in the crowded cities of money-maddened men,
Not in the shaded cloister where Learning trims
her pen,
But out on the Kansas prairies, in the purity of the
Sun,
There are the great thoughts builded, visions of
empires begun;



Here on the wooded hillside I sicken in heart and
brain,
But some day, beloved Mother, I'm coming *home*
again.

Willard Wattles

Carrie Nation

A poor, bewildered, half-crazed crone,
She died, forgotten and alone;
And some there were who stopped to scoff
When the good old dame was taken off,
While the busy world went wheeling on,
Scarce knowing even she was gone.

Of course, she may have done some good,
But then, most any woman could
Who had the muscle and a hatchet,
With Irish wit as keen to match it;
Yet smashing windows so erratic
Soon proved her just a plain fanatic.

A sort of Jezebel crusader,
Like Don Quixote, nothing stayed her —
No wonder people shied eggs at her,
She seemed to like to watch 'em splatter,
And stood like wild things when at bay,
So sort of fearless, old and gray.



SUNFLOWERS

And then to die so, after all,
Insane and in a hospital;
Good God, suppose she had been sane,
And we who had the rotten brain;
I'd hate to stand on Judgment Day
Beside that woman old and gray.

I'd hate to face those flashing eyes
That scanned a state's hypocrisies,
And woke a commonwealth to shame
With crashing axe and words of flame,
Until men dare to carry out
The laws they made and lied about.

Willard Wattles

John Brown

States are not great
Except as men may make them;
Men are not great except they do and dare.
But States, like men,
Have destinies that take them —
That bear them on, not knowing why or where.

The WHY repels
The philosophic searcher —
The WHY and WHERE all questionings defy,



SUNFLOWERS

Until we find,
Far back in youthful nurture,
Prophetic facts that constitute the WHY.

All merit comes
From braving the unequal;
All glory comes from daring to begin.
Fame loves the State
That, reckless of the sequel,
Fights long and well, whether it lose or win.

Than in our State
No illustration apter
Is seen or found of faith and hope and will.
Take up her story;
Every leaf and chapter
Contains a record that conveys a thrill.

And there is one
Whose faith, whose fight, whose failing,
Fame shall placard upon the walls of time.
He dared begin —
Despite the unavailing;
He dared begin, when failure was a crime.

When over Africa
Some future cycle
Shall sweep the lake-gemmed upland with its surge;



SUNFLOWERS

When, as with trumpet
Of Archangel Michael,
Culture shall bid a colored race emerge;

When busy cities
There, in constellations,
Shall gleam with spires and palaces and domes,
With marts wherein
Is heard the noise of nations;
With summer groves surrounding stately homes —

There, future orators
To cultured freemen
Shall tell of valor, and recount with praise
Stories of Kansas,
And of Lacedaemon —
Cradles of freedom then of ancient days.

From boulevards
O'erlooking both Nyanzas,
The statured bronze shall glitter in the sun,
With rugged lettering,
"JOHN BROWN OF KANSAS:
*He dared begin,
He lost,
But, losing, won.*"

Eugene F. Ware



SUNFLOWERS

John Brown

John Brown — that's all; a serious-purposed man,
Hard-handed, tender-hearted; God's great plan
Through his gnarled, knotty nature pulsing ran.

"Fanatic!" hissed the mob, with loud acclaim:
They, unremembered; he, close-clasped by fame,
While fades away the gallows' dreadful shame.

Each cause its Christ, its sacrifice to might!
Scorn soon is done, and Freedom's piercing light
Dispels the mists 'round Calvary's awful height!

W. H. Simpson

A Tribute to John Brown

Against this crime of crimes he fought and fell;
He freed a race and found a prison-cell;
In mid-air hung upon the gibbet's tree,
But lived and died, thank God, to make men free.

And dusky men the ages down will tell.
For what he fought, and how he bravely fell;
And dim the jewels in each earthly crown,
Beside the luster of thy name, John Brown.

J. G. Waters



SUNFLOWERS

John Brown

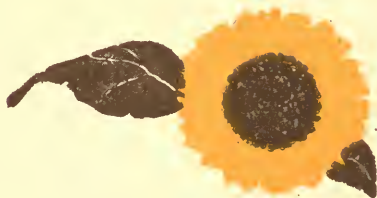
Had he been made of such poor clay as we,
Who, when we feel a little fire aglow
'Gainst wrong within us, dare not let it grow,
But crouch and hide it, lest the scorner see
And sneer, yet bask our self-complacency
In that faint warmth — had he been fashioned
so,

The nation ne'er had come to that birth-throe
That gave the world a new humanity.

He was no vain professor of the word —

His life a mockery of the creed — he made
No discount on the Golden Rule, but heard
Above the Senate's brawls and din of trade
Ever the clank of chains, until he stirred
The nation's heart on that immortal raid.

William Herbert Carruth



In Idol-Smashing Land

*From boulevards o'erlooking both Nyanzas
The shaft of bronze shall glitter in the sun
With rugged lettering, "John Brown of Kansas:
He dared begin, he lost, but losing won!"
Eugene F. Ware*

Over there in Kansas they have torn their idols down,
They are standing up and jumping on the grave of
Old John Brown;
They say he was a murderer, a cut-throat and a
"red,"
He started Kansas bleeding, and no more it should
be "bled" —
For markers and for monuments and cash-consum-
ing things,
To mark the bloody border where the raider had his
flings.
The state has put the money up to save Brown's
cabin shack —
His home at Osawatomie, surrounded by a park —
So when his soul, that's marching on, shall come a-
marching back,
'Twill have a place to huddle in and hover after dark.
"John Brown of Osawatomie, he made our soil so
free,"
This poem in the school books was the stuff we used
to see;



SUNFLOWERS

But now they've built a bonfire underneath the soul
of John,
So hot he couldn't light there, but must keep marchin'
on.

For when the legislature passed the John Brown
cabin bill,
The opposition kicked and said he was a bad old pill;
They voted not to honor thus the early Kansas saint,
And painted John Brown's body just as black as they
could paint.

The "Brown of Osawatomie" the muses sing about,
They said was Mr. O. C. Brown, who laid the town-
site out;

The old John Brown who loafed there was a horse-
thief and a bum,
They'd never vote to honor him, they said, till king-
dom come.

"Old John Brown was an anarchist of the assassin
breed,

He brought no wealth to Kansas, and he only made
her bleed;

His only work in Kansas was for lawlessness and
crime,

He was the Booth, the Guiteau and the Czolgosz of
his time.

He is the only lurid blot upon our Kansas fame,
And I, for one, could never vote to keep alive his
name."



SUNFLOWERS

They blackened thus the name of Brown, the Kan-
sas demigod,

Who with the blood of freedom dewed the glisten-
ing prairie sod.

Insurgent Kansas would insurgue against insurgents
dead;

Did Old John Brown turn over in his tomb at what
they said?

His "body lies a-mouldering in the grave" we used
to sing;

It doubtless then is mouldering on the other side this
spring.

We sang "The Stars of heaven are a-looking kindly
down,"

But the stars upon the Kansas stage are blistering
John Brown.

Another instance of the way the cards of fate will
stack,

His "soul it went a-marching on," and now it can't
come back.

No name is safe in Kansas where the idol-smasher
knocks,

They've proved that Sockless Jerry really wore the
best of socks;

No reputation over there is ever made to last —

Why, even William Allen White has heard the thun-
der blast;

That "What's-the-matter" article in '96 he wrote,



SUNFLOWERS

It made his reputation as a world-wide man of note,
And now the Kansas rebels who give every man a
fall,

Declare it wasn't written by Bill Allen White at all.
He took it almost bodily, the smashing ones declare,
From a letter that was written by the Kansas poet,
Ware.

'Twas thus they dealt with William, and we'll hear
'fore very long,

That Ware, himself a faker, cribbed his "*Washer-
woman's Song*."

For they're on the move in Kansas, and the idol of
today

Is tomorrow smashed in fragments 'mid its broken
feet of clay.

"It is morning here in Kansas," as Walt Mason
aptly said,

It is always dawn in Kansas and the morning sky
is red.

There they make no creed their jailer, never in their
slow decay

From the tomb of the old prophets steal the funeral
lamps away

To light up the martyr fagots 'round the Prophets of
Today.

But the prophets of the present, when the funeral
lamps are out,

Take the dust of the old prophets and scatter it
about,



SUNFLOWERS

And the soil is thus kept fertile so that new ideas
can spring,
For over there in Kansas still the intellect is king.
C. L. Edson

A Wheat-Field Fantasy

As I sat on a Kansas hilltop,
While, far away from my feet,
Rippled the lights and shadows
Dancing across acres of wheat,

The sound of the grain as it murmured
Wrought a wonder with me —
It turned from the voice of the Prairie
Into the roar of the sea.

And I saw, not the running wind-waves,
But an ocean that washed below
In ridging and crumbling breakers
And ceaseless motion and flow;

Then, as a valley is flooded
With opaline mists at morn
Which momentarily flow asunder
And leave green spaces of corn —



SUNFLOWERS

There burst the strangest vision
Up from that ancient sea.—
'Twas not the pearl-white Venus
Anadyomene,

'Twas the bobbing ears of horses
And a head with a great hat crowned
And a binder that burst upon me
Sudden, as from the ground —

And the waves gave place to the wheatlands
Myriad-touched with gold —
Then my soul felt century-weary
And untold aeons old;

For a rock-ledge sloped beside me
And the lime-traced shells it bore
Had plied that ancient ocean
Each with a sentient oar.

Harry Kemp

The Promise of Bread

Out on the frozen uplands, underneath the snow
and sleet,
In the bosom of the plowland sleeps the Promise
of the Wheat;
With the ice for head-and-footstone, and a snowy
shroud outspread



SUNFLOWERS

In the frost-locked tomb of winter sleeps the Miracle
of Bread.

With its hundred thousand reapers and its hundred
thousand men,

And the click of guard and sickle and the flails that
turn again,

And drover's shout, and snap of whips and creak of
horses' tugs,

And a thin red line o' gingham girls that carry water
jugs;

And yellow stalks and dagger beards that stab thro'
cotton clothes,

And farmer boys a-shocking wheat in long and
crooked rows,

And dust-veiled men on mountain stacks, whose
pitchforks flash and gleam;

And threshing engines shrieking songs in syllables
of steam,

And elevators painted red that lift their giant arms
And beckon to the Harvest God above the brooding

farms,

And loaded trains that hasten forth, a hungry world
to fill —

All sleeping just beneath the snow, out yonder on the
hill.

C. L. Edson



A Willer Crick Incident

Long ago before the 'hoppers an' the drouth of seventy-four,

Long before we talked of boomin', long before the first Grange store.

Long before they was a city on the banks of Willer Crick,

Come a woman doin' washin' an' a little boy named Dick:

 Kinder weakly like an' sick:

 Wasn't even common quick;

An' the folks said that his daddy used to be a loonytic.

He was undersized an' ugly an' was tongue-tied in his talk;

He was awkward an' near-sighted an' he couldn't more'n walk;

An' the other boys all teased him; no one knowed the reason why,


'Cept to hear his mother pet him; "There, ma's angul, there, don't cry."

 When they was nobody nigh

 She would set by him an' sigh;

An' she'd comb his hair an' kiss him: "Ma's boy 'ull be well, bye'm bye."

But instead of gettin' stronger Dick grew thinner every year;



SUNFLOWERS

An' although his legs got longer, his pore brain
ketched in the gear.

But he always loved the crick so, an' 'twas there 'at
he 'u'd play;

Killin' lucky bugs an' buildin' dams 'at always broke
away.

But his mother used to pray:

"God make Dickie strong, some day!"

God 'u'd make him strong an' happy, her "pore
angul" she 'u'd say.

They was not a long procession when he died, an'
all I mind

Was a little green farm wagon with two churs set
in behind.


But it held a lonely mother sobbin' wildly for her own
An' the sorrow et in deeper for she knew she grieved
alone.

'Mid the sunflowers lightly blown,

Where the sticker weeds are sown,

No one knows the hopes an' heart-aches buried 'neath
that rough-cut stone.

William Allen White



SUNFLOWERS

A Border of Memory

We had moved up to Palymra,
In the year of sixty-one,
From our claim on the Neosho
When our harvesting was done.

Then my husband had enlisted,
All his heart divinely stirred,
And I lived but for the children,
And to hear the scanty word

That came slowly back to Kansas
From his precious company,
As the crimson tide of battle
Bore it onward to the sea.

Twelve months passed, and the next springtime
Came with clouds of denser gloom
And the passion on the prairies
Broke into more deadly bloom;

And the summer brought the terror
Close upon the shuddering town,
Of the bloody-handed Quantrell
On the country sweeping down.

Day by day, the awful menace
Weighted every lingering hour,



SUNFLOWERS

And we slept in trouble dreaming
Of the fierce marauder's power.

Night by night, I made me ready
For whatever blow might fall,
With the children all about me,
Trained to waken at my call.

And I gathered strength and courage
From the spirit of my son,
Such a bright, intrepid stripling —
Ne'er a danger he would shun.

He had played so much at soldier,
Marching ever in the van,
He had taken on the feeling
And the valor of a man.

So I listened, sad and shrinking,
When upon a weary day
He came in all flushed and eager
With the words he had to say:

“ All the men are clean done over,
Watching so by day and night,
And we boys are going on duty —
We're just spoiling for a fight.

“ But they say there is no danger —
Quantrell's clear across the line,



SUNFLOWERS

And we've but to give the signal
If we see the slightest sign.

“Jed and I — for we're the oldest —
Take our stand at Curran's farm.
You don't care much, do you, mother?
We'll be safe enough from harm.”

So I stifled my foreboding,
Kissed him twice and let him go
Out into the somber twilight
In the pride that mothers know.

Such a night! all torn and tortured
By a host of nameless fears,
I was certain every minute
There would fall upon my ears

The abrupt, determined ringing
Of the heavy college bell
Which in preconcerted clamor
Any peril was to tell.

And I seemed to hear the echoes
Of the warfare far away:
All its horror, doubly dreadful,
Pressed upon me where I lay.

But at length I slumbered briefly,
And the dawn in sweet surprise



Filtered through my eastern window,
Falling gently on my eyes.

Then deploring all my weakness,
Since no evil chance had come,
I rejoiced in the glad morning
That would bring my darling home;


So to give him instant welcome
I flung wide the outer door —
And I found him 'neath the trellis
Lying straight upon the floor.

He but slept, I thought in wonder:
It was death, instead of sleep!
Shot down by a passing ruffian
He had still the power to creep

Toward the town so gladly guarded
In the strength he loved to try,
And but reached the dear home-shelter,
Spent with effort, there to die.

That same day devoted Lawrence
Was destroyed by Quantrell's band;
I was only one of many
Smitten by a murderous hand,

And I tell my story calmly,
Now so many years have passed,



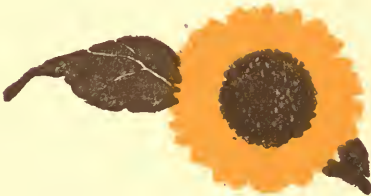
SUNFLOWERS

But whoever gives such life-blood
Feels the anguish to the last.

Yet the sorrow has its glory,
Shining steady like a star —
All the world had need of Kansas,
Consecrated by the war.

And the God who guides our battles
Shaped the purpose of the State;
We have bought her for His uses
And the price has made us great.

Florence L. Snow






SUNFLOWERS

The Defense of Lawrence

All night upon the guarded hill,
Until the stars were low,
Wrapped round as with Jehovah's will
We waited for the foe;
All night the silent sentinels
Moved by like gliding ghosts;
All night the fancied warning bells
Held all men to their posts.

We heard the sleeping prairies' breath,
The forest's human moans,
The hungry gnashing of the teeth
Of wolves on bleaching bones;
We marked the roar of rushing fires,
The neigh of frightened steeds,
The voices as of far-off lyres
Among the river reeds.

We were but thirty-nine who lay
Beside our rifles then;
We were but thirty-nine, and they
Were twenty hundred men.
Our lean limbs shook and reeled about,
Our feet were gashed and bare,
And all the breezes shredded out
Our garments in the air.



SUNFLOWERS

Sick, sick of all the woes which spring
Where falls the Southron's rod,
Our very souls had learned to cling
To freedom as to God;
And so we never thought of fear
In all those stormy hours,
For every mother's son stood near
The awful, unseen powers.

And twenty hundred men had met
And sworn an oath of hell,
That ere the morrow's sun might set,
Our smoking homes should tell
A tale of ruin and of wrath
And damning hate in store,
To bar the freeman's western path
Against him evermore.

And when three hundred of the foe
Rode up in scorn and pride,
Whoso had watched us then might know
That God was on our side,
For all at once a mighty thrill
Of grandeur through us swept,
And strong and swiftly down the hill
Like Gideons we leapt.

All, all throughout that Sabbath day
A wall of fire we stood,

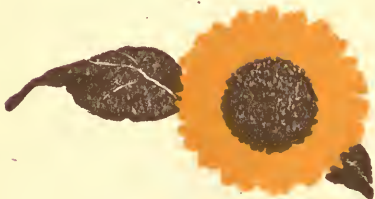


SUNFLOWERS

And held the baffled foe at bay;
 And streaked the ground with blood.
And when the sun was very low
 They wheeled their stricken flanks,
And passed wearily and slow
 Beyond the river banks.

Beneath the everlasting stars
 We bended childlike knees,
And thanked God for the shining scars
 Of His large victories;
And some, who lingered, said they heard
 Such wondrous music pass
As though a seraph's voice had stirred
 The pulses of the grass.

Richard Realf






SUNFLOWERS

The Choice

They hunted the thundering, flying herds over the
range all day;
At evening they drove them through a gate and
closed it and rode away.
At dawn they came with branding-irons, and they
made the place a hell,
Curving queer snake lariats in the dust of the high
corral.
Terror-eyed, the horses shied, and when the day was
done,
With streaming mane to the open plain they dashed
away — save one.

All night long in her narrow cage, a white mare
fretted and foamed,
And shrilly called to her vanished mates on the shad-
owed range they roamed.
The pride of the herd, she was wise and strong,
glossy, supple and fleet,
Never before had there been such eyes, such ears,
such dainty feet.
Through the wooden bars she watched the stars, as
they burned the whole night through,
Then faded away. Through the morning gray she
saw *them* come — and knew —



SUNFLOWERS

They caught her again with their leaping ropes, and
blinded her gleaming eyes;
With bands of leather as strong as steel they bound
her head and thighs;
They ripped her hide from shoulder to flank with
heels of constant fire,
And her tongue grew dark with blood and foam, and
dust, 'neath the jagged wire;
On the distant side of the high divide, her mates
roamed free again,
Must she submit to an iron bit, a pair of spurs, and
Pain?

With a mad disdain she gathered up for a last and
mighty spring,
And left her rider beside the trail, a crumpled, broken
thing, . . .
They brought her to bay at the close of day, on the
brink of a steep coulee;
She looked around, then plunged down — down —,
and that night she was — free.

Dorothy Statton



SUNFLOWERS

Funston

Never any style about him, not imposing on parade;
Couldn't make him look heroic with no end of golden
braid.

Figure sort o' stout and dumpy, hair an' whiskers
kind o' red;

But he's always movin' forward when there's trouble
on ahead.

Five foot five o' nerve an' darin', eyes pale blue an'
steely bright,

Not afraid of men or devils — that is Funston in a
fight.

Fighter since he learned to toddle, soldier since he
got his growth;

Knows the Spaniard and the savage — for he's
fought and licked 'em both.

Not much figure in the ballroom, not much hand at
breakin' hearts,

Rotten ringer for Apollo, but right there when some-
thing starts.

Just a bunch of brain and muscle, but you always
feel, somehow,

That he'll get what he goes after when he mixes
in a row.

Weyler found out all about him, set a price upon
his head;



SUNFLOWERS

Aguinaldo's crafty warriors filled him nearly full o'
lead.

Yellow men and yellow fever tried to cut off his
career,

But since first he hit the war-trail it has never
slipped a gear.

And the heart of all the nation gives a patriotic
throb

At the news that Kansas Funston has again gone on
his job.

James J. Montague

Ode to Kansas

Kansas: Where we've torn the shackles

From the farmer's leg;

Kansas: Where the hen that cackles,

Always lays an egg;


Where the cows are fairly achin'

To go on record breakin',

And the hogs are raising bacon

By the keg!

Walt Mason



SUNFLOWERS

My Sage-Brush Girl

Under a cross in a rainless land my Sage-brush Girl
is sleeping,

Her beautiful eyes shine out no more; her cheeks
have shed their bloom.

The cactus pierces her dreamless heart and I have
ceased from weeping.

My eyes are dry as the stunted sage that parches
o'er her tomb.

The years have withered my flesh like grass, and
filled my heart with knowing;

I, who was desert born and reared, have won to
the garden lands,

Where the earth is robed in a rug of green and
the barley blooms are blowing,

And the dewdrops blaze where the stalks of maize
hold up their heavenly hands.

Deep in the dust of a desert waste my Sage-brush
Girl reposes;

Her beautiful eyes shine out no more; her lips have
bloomed and died;

A gypsum bed in the desert dead has won her cheeks'
red roses;

And the day of our dream is a sinking sun dipped
under the Great Divide.



SUNFLOWERS

I know who wielded the flaming sword that drove
my tribe before me

Into the dusty desert wide, where all the flowers
are dead;

Know why we met in a rainless land when the dream
of dreams came o'er me;

We were the disinherited kin of the lords of meat
and bread.

We were the poor outside the door of the Garden
of Singing Water;

The poor who scurry like hunted things to the arid
wastes to hide.

So I was born to the desert sands and she was the
desert's daughter —

But I have won to the garden lands, while she in
the desert died.

Those yearning days were a drama dear that the drop
of the curtain closes.

Her beautiful eyes shine out no more, her lips have
ceased to glow.

A gypsum bed in the desert dead has won her cheeks'
red roses,

But I have seen from a hillside green the black
hawk drifting slow.

C. L. Edson



SUNFLOWERS

May on Oread

*"Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there."*

So plained the Poet from a land of fire,
Forgetful of the gaudy melon-bloom,
Heart-hungry for his English daffodils
And for the elm tree's tiny crinkled green.
— He did not know the land of my desire,
The wild bees on the lilac's purple plume,
The sun-transfigured glory of the hills,
And May on Oread, glad and sweet and clean.

Willard Wattles

The Man Behind the Gun

There are many to sing of the noble deeds of Kan-
sas' favorite sons —
The men who stood in the early days so manfully
by their guns,
Who shed their blood at the Nation's call for the
martyr-state's release,
And led her out of the depths of war and into the
ways of peace —
I honor them all; but I honor, too, the Infinite Wis-
dom's plan



SUNFLOWERS

Of putting a man behind the gun, and a woman
behind the man!

The men of the days of Old John Brown — Lord
love them, every one!

Each is a hero in Kansas' eyes, and each is a favorite
son.

But I venture to say that you'd find if you got right
down to the truth of things

They were mostly held to their duty's post by a couple
of apron strings!

For who could waver, or who could fail in that
struggle in Freedom's name

When woman's courage and woman's faith were
backing him in the game?

Our dear fore-mothers! who lived and loved in the
days when the State was young,

(And many have gone to their last long rest, un-
honed, unknown, unsung)

For Woman rose to the needs of the hour when the
dear-bought peace was won,

And backed up the man at the plough as well as she'd
backed up the man at the gun!

He gave his strength for the land's increase, his
voice to the new State's good,

But back of his every word and deed some valiant
woman stood.



SUNFLOWERS

There are men at the front in our State today, and
back of each one stands

Some dauntless woman with loving heart and ready
and willing hands.

I do not ask for her Equal Rights, nor a voice at
your polls as yet,

(For Heaven knows I am anything but a rampant
suffragette!)

But give her a place in your Halls of Fame, along
with your honored ones;

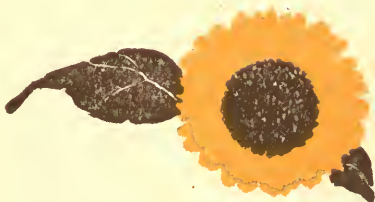
Let Kansas' favorite daughters rank as high as her
favorite sons.

I pledge you loyally, heart and hand, as only a
Kansan can

A toast:

To the Man who is at the front—and the
Woman behind the Man!

Esther M. Clark





SUNFLOWERS

The Hands That Cling

The hands that cling, and will not let you go
Your sweet, untroubled way;
The hands that cling, because they love you so,
And bid you stay;
Sometimes that press upon your eyes to hide
From you the blessed Vision of your King;
Sometimes that stay your lips lest you should chide
The hands that cling.

Such weak, frail hands for helping! Yet how near
Their duty lies, forgot!
It is their very weakness holds you, dear,
As strength could not.
The hands that would their last crust give, not share,
And every treasure to your feet would bring;
The hands that should be strong to lift and bear,
Yet only cling.

The hands that cling, yet will not be denied
Some service for love's sake,
And in its doing are as glorified;
The hands that take
No weight from your sad cross. Oh, lighter far
It were but for the burdens that they bring!
God only knows what hind'ring things they are —
The hands that cling.



SUNFLOWERS

The hands that cling today and hold you fast
Because they love you so,
I know, my sweet, must loose their hold at last,
And let you go.
Then, bruised and bleeding, lifted pleading toward
The Heaven that bends above them, pitying,
Oh, take them, hold them fast in Thine, Christ —
Lord —
The hands that cling!

Esther M. Clark

The Mother

Dear Lord, there is so much to do in one brief, busy
day:
The little clothes to wash and iron, and mend and
put away;
The littered toys to gather up, the little beds to
make;
And little griefs to soothe away from little hearts
that ache.
The little bodies to be kept, for Thy sake, clean and
sweet,
As temples for the dwelling of the Christly spirit
meet.
And Mary Mother one time knew the blessedness
of this:
The little feet to wash at night, the little lips to
'kiss.



SUNFLOWERS

Forgive me, Lord, if that I seem neglectful of Thy
work.

It is not that my heart is hard, it is not that I shirk.
But that my heart and hands are full with these,
my little ones,

My little daughters, fair and sweet, my sturdy little
sons.

Once I rejoiced in serving Thee, and only Thee
always;

And now sometimes I am so tired I cannot even
pray.

But I draw near at night to Him whose mother knew
the bliss

Of tender, little feet to wash, and little lips to kiss.

Esther M. Clark

April on Half Moon Mountain

Seed time and weed time and cattle out to grass,
Women-folk a-settin' hens and plantin' garden sass.
Gee, I'm tired of pickled pork and home baked
beans —

Mother, pass the sassafras and sour dock greens.
Peach bloom and mint perfume and me a-diggin' bait,
I ought to be a-plowin' but the fish won't wait.

C. L. Edson



Meadow Lark and Prairie Wind

An airy flutter of slender, brown wings,
And hark! is it joy or sorrow that sings
In the one swelling note,
That trembles and thrills through the long-lifted
throat?

A rush o'er the prairies, a sorrowful cry,
And the quivering grasses bow down with a sigh,
Stirred deep by emotion
That the wind sings and cries o'er the wide grassy
ocean.

A thrill of the heart, a tremble of grasses,
And wind-sound and bird-song a melody passes.
We puzzle long, but we may not know
If wind or lark first sang this song,
With its burden of exquisite woe.

'Anne Reece Pugh





Clover and Sky

O blest is he whose sorrow
Hath lasted but a night!
Thrice blest he whose tomorrow
Dawns ever fair and bright!
Yet who, the wide world over,
Could choose to sit and sigh?
With underneath, the clover,
And overhead, the sky.

Then make no friends with trouble,
And have no peace with gloom;
For surely Joy is double
When all the Earth's a-bloom!
Look up! There bends above you
The tender, shelt'ring sky.
Look down! And there, to love you,
The clover, sweet and shy.

Last night the wind fell sobbing
Against my window pane,
And like my heart's dull throbbing
There beat the mournful rain.
But now the storm is over
There's none so blithe as I,
With underneath, the clover,
And overhead, the sky.

Esther M. Clark



SUNFLOWERS

A Ridge of Corn

With heart grown weary of the heat,
 And hungry for the breath
Of field and farm, with eager feet
 I trod the pavement dry as death
Through city streets where vice is born —
And sudden, lo! a ridge of corn.

Above the dingy roof it stood,
 A dome of tossing, tangled spears,
Dark, cool and sweet as any wood,
 Its silken gleam and plumed ears
Laughed on me through the haze of morn,
The tranquil presence of the corn.

Upon the salt wind from the sea,
 Borne westward swift as dreams
Of boyhood are, I seemed 'to be
 Once more a part of sounds and gleams
Thrown on me by the winds of morn
Amid the rustling rows of corn.

I bared my head, and on me fell
 The old wild wizardy again
Of leaf and sky, the moving spell
 Of boyhood's easy joy or pain,
When pumpkin trump was Siegfried's horn
Echoing down the walls of corn.



SUNFLOWERS

I saw the field (as trackless then
As wood to Daniel Boone)
Wherein we hunted wolves and men,
And ranged and twanged the green bassoon.
Not blither Robin Hood's merry horn
Than pumpkin vine amid the corn.

In central deeps the melons lay,
Slow swelling in the August sun.
I traced again the narrow way,
And joined again the stealthy run.
The jack-o'-lantern race was born
Within the shadows of the corn.

O wide, west wilderness of leaves!
O playmates far away! O'er thee
The slow wind like a mourner grieves,
And stirs the plumed ears like a sea.
Would we could sound again the horn
In vast sweet presence of the corn!

Hamlin Garland



SUNFLOWERS

Plowing Corn in Kansas

They're plowing corn in Kansas upon the old home
farm,
The slender shoots are up a foot, the morning sun
is warm,
The dew is fading from the grass, I see the yellow
breast
Of Father Meadow-lark come home to that low-
hidden nest;
He's had his morning whistle while the meadow-
lands were dark,
And he's brought a squirming breakfast back to
Mrs. Meadow-lark.

.
So hurry up them horses, boys, and watch old Jim
and Kate;
Hop down and leave the water-jug beside the open
gate.
I've got my red bandanner on and opened up my
shirt,
And the cultivator-shovels are a-gouging through
the dirt.
It's half a mile before we turn and take another
row,
For it's plowing-time in Kansas and the morning
sun is low.



SUNFLOWERS,

Hi, Tommy, there's a gopher. Can't you hit him
with a clod?

Get a hard one, that's the ticket, or a sun-caked
lump of sod.

I heard another chipper over yonder — Gosh, I'm
hot,

And old Kate has nipped her breakfast over half
a city lot.

But you can't be minding horses and a-chasing
gophers, too,

And the boss won't go plumb busted 'cause old Katie
had a chew.

Say, you're crowding pretty close there; can't you
hold 'em in a spell?

You must think a horse's sneezing suits my shirt-
tail pretty well.

Never knowed a mare like that 'un, when she creeps
up close behind

She is sure to swallow something and to snort herself
plumb blind;

Blamed if I'd a rode so near you, if I didn't think
that you

Knowed enough to keep them horses back the way
you ought to do.

That rabbit's mighty impident a-browsin' round so
brash,

Just reach me that 'ere black-snake and I'll give his
legs a lash;



SUNFLOWERS

And that crow will lose his tail-piece if he gets so
near the wheel;

Serve him right, the greedy beggar — worms must
make a messy meal.

Don't see why the prairie critters act so sort of
confident —

Thar! I said ye'd git in trouble — wisht I had some
liniment.

I think I see the gate-post, Tom, and there's the
water-jug.

I'll beat ye there. Oh, drat the luck, old Pete has
dropped a tug.

Look out, you're tearin' up the corn; that ain't the
way to do,

I'd give you walking-papers if I was hirin' you.

You've drunk up half a gallon — but I guess there
ain't no harm;

We'll both drive back to fetch some more. I feel
uncommon warm.

.
They're plowing corn in Kansas, the morning sun
is high,

You'll hear a cow-bell ringing through the silence
by and by;

And then an apron waving nearly half a mile away,
It's dinner time, I think there'll be some rhubarb-
pie today.



But I'm in Massachusetts, and we've had a tardy
spring,
And 'twas only just this morning that I heard a
robin sing.

Willard Wattles

Bouncing-Bet*

When that I see thee by the dusty road,
Or where some kindly householder has spared
The sprawling matted growth that thou hast dared
To trail along the skirts of his abode,
When that I see thee thus, chance-sprung, wind-
sowed,
A wildling waif for whom no one has cared,
My eyes do fill, to think that thou hast fared
As other prophets to whom much is owed.
For when the winged scourge swept o'er our land,
Leaving all black, laying all green things low,
Thy pale sweet blossoms scatheless it passed by —
Through thee God let our fathers understand —
Unloved and useless, thine it was to show
The bow of promise in thy nether sky.

Rose Morgan

* In memoriam; Kansas, 1874.



SUNFLOWERS

Sunflowers in the Corn

There's a certain day in summer that I always
recognize,

Though I'm far away from prairie land and sun,
By the pulling at my heart-strings and the aching in
my eyes,

And I know that back in Kansas, harvest's done.
The mellow sun is gleaming on the stacks of ripened
wheat,

The stubble-field is empty and forlorn ;
With a hoe across my shoulder and bare-footed in
the heat,

I am off to cut the sunflowers in the corn.

Oh, what mystery of magic down the green and
gracious aisles,

Lures me on and on forever to the end ;


The flapping corn is whispering while summer bends
and smiles ;

The warm wind scampers, shouting, "Follow,
friend."

He is all about me tugging, with his shoulder pressed
to mine,

"Come and catch me, don't you feel my circling
arm ?

Oh, there never was a farmer boy with comrade such
as thine ;



SUNFLOWERS

See, I flush thy cheek with kisses, what's the harm?"

The corn is waving o'er me and the swelling ears
are sweet

Where the silver floss is pushing from the white.
What a wealth of scarlet mallow bloom is crimsoning
my feet;

There's a turtle — watch him scramble out of sight.
Why, there's every prairie creature here — a dove
upon her nest;

Two white eggs beneath a friendly cockle-bur;
Lucky thing for you, old cocky. You're a most out-
rageous pest,
But I'll pass you by because you shelter her.

Here's a sunflower — watch him nodding with his
saucy, swarthy face,

Golden ear-ringed, don't you see the gypsy king?
Amber beads bedangled o'er him with a frankly,
flaunting grace;

How he jostles Mr. Cornstalk, poor old thing.
Here, you'll have to stop it, Tony, for you quite
forget that you

Are a tramp, for all gaudy, gilded crown;
You're a vagrant, and a dead-beat; you're a non-
producer, too,

And I've come to chop you, Tony — tumble down.



SUNFLOWERS

What a revelation dawning, what a wonder over-
head,

All the tender, over-arching azure dome.

With the sun ablaze above me, is it prairie paths I
tread?

No, 'tis fairyland, 'tis fairyland I roam.

Titania is swinging in a silken hammock hung

From burly thistle-top to goldenrod;

There's a Puck on every jimson-weed where once a
spider swung,

While milk-weeds chamber Pixies in each pod.

Oh, 'tis fairyland, 'tis fairyland, and I a warrior
stout,

With saber-steel a-flashing in the sun.

How I charge the crazy gypsy kings and put them
all to rout;

Watch the long battalions waver, break, and run.

Hark, I hear a bugle calling me, the battle-pennons
gleam.

Forward — once again the supper-horn,

And I wander home at twilight (Can it be I only
dream?)

From a day of awful carnage in the corn.

Willard Wattles



SUNFLOWERS

Cutting the Corn

The morning glows on marching rows
Of weary, tattered corn;
The landscape looms with draggled plumes
And garments frayed and torn.
The day of doom is rising high
When all the cornfield soldiers die.

Scream, ravens, scream, the summer dream
Shall crumble in the breeze;
Stare, red-eyed day, with sickly ray,
Above the dogwood trees.
The cringing nymphs are terror dumb,
The harvest of the corn has come.

Trail tangled silken sheen no more;
Blue velvet blossoms bleed and die;
For, crashing through your bosom's core,
The doom shall smite you, hip and thigh.
A tear or two of sweetened dew
The mourning year shall weep for you.

The farm boy stands with eager hands,
That clasp the bluish blade;
Then right and left the stacks are cleft,
And now a wigwam's made.
And like an Indian village rise
The yellow tents before our eyes.



SUNFLOWERS

Each blade stroke stirs the cockle-burs
And crab-grass growing by,
While echoes shout, "Come out, come out!
And see the cornfields die!"
And unseen nymphs go skipping past
Unhoused, unheveled, doomed at last.

Stampeded hosts of Indian ghosts,
And many a vanished chief,
Ride racing by with battle cry —
But never stir a leaf!
And brooding dreams of other days
Drift down like dust upon the maize.

In gold and green the country scene
Is decked in harvest trim;
The sunshine sifts in bluish drifts
Across the landscape dim.
And thronging through the autumn air
Are gossamers of dryad's hair.

The fodder shocks will feed the flocks
And herds of grunting swine;
But now they stand a ghostly band
Of tepees in a line.
The ancient moon creeps up the hill
To listen to the whippoorwill.

C. L. Edson



SUNFLOWERS

Farm Machinery

We have things with cogs and pulleys that will stack and bale the hay, we have scarecrows automatic that will drive the crows away; we have riding cultivators, so we may recline at ease, as we travel up the corn rows, to the tune of "haws" and "gees;" we have engines pumping water, running churns and grinding corn, and one farmer that I know of has a big steam dinner horn; all of which is very pleasant to reflect upon, I think, but we need a good contrivance that will teach the calves to drink.

Now, as in the days of Noah, man must take a massive pail, loaded up with milk denatured, with a dash of Adam's ale, and go down among the calkins as the lion tamer goes 'mong the monarchs of the jungle, at the famous three-ring shows; and the calves are fierce and hungry, and they haven't sense to wait, till he gets a good position and has got his bucket straight; and they act as though they hadn't e'en a glimmering of sense, for they climb upon his shoulders ere he is inside the fence, and they butt him in the stomach, and they kick him everywhere, till he thinks he'd give a nickel for a decent chance to swear; then they all get underneath him and capsize him in the mud, and the milk runs down his whiskers and his garments in a flood, and you really ought to see him when he goes back to his home quoting divers pagan authors and the bards of ancient

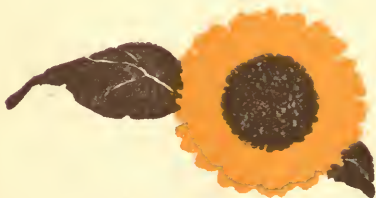


SUNFLOWERS

Rome. And he murmurs while he's washing mud off at the kitchen sink: "What we need is a contraption that will teach the calves to drink!"

We've machinery for planting, we've machines to reap and thrash, and the housewife has an engine that will grind up meat for hash; we've machines to do our washing and to wring the laundered duds, we've machines for making cider and to dig the Eurbank spuds; all about the modern farmstead you may hear the levers clink, but we're shy of a contrivance that will teach the calves to drink!

Walt Mason





SUNFLOWERS

Before the Robin Dares

In the dark of dawn at the verge of spring
I heard the red bird caroling.

.

When snow patches lie on the links' soft folds,
Or ever the willow a catkin holds,

When the pines stand dark in the darkling west,
While the east flushes soft as his shy mate's breast,

The red bird warm from the heart of spring
Sets bare branches a blossoming;

And from out the dark rings his challenge clear,
*What cheer among mortals? What cheer? What
cheer?*

At the sound of his clarion sweet and high
My heart forgets the springs gone by,

And answers him back in the dawn of the year,
All cheer, fellow mortal!. What cheer? All cheer!

.

In the dark of dawn at the verge of spring
I heard the red bird caroling.

Rose Morgan



SUNFLOWERS

The Land That God Forgot

Oh, the land that God forgot
Where the sand and cactus ruled,
Paradise of rattlesnakes,
Bald and arid, brackish-pooled;

Hither Coronado came
Lusting after precious stones,
And the fiery desert waste
Whitened everywhere with bones.

Then the Forty-niners passed
With their oxen gaunt and thin
And they only knew the land
As a place to perish in;

But at last the mind of Man
With a vision fired and thrilled
Saw how empires lay asleep,
Dreamed of homes with comfort filled,

So the tawny sand was trenched
With a thousand fluid bars
Which revived the ancient plain
Like the waterways of Mars—

Now the tender grass springs up,
And the sleek kine lay them down,



SUNFLOWERS

And the freights toil in and out,
Fat with wares from many a town;

And the wheat rolls, billowy-vast,
And the ancient ocean bed
Sends up miles of tasseled corn
Nodding many a silken head.

Schools are builded, churches rise,
Children to the clime are born,
And they learn to love the land
Once a hissing and a scorn.

The land that God forgot,
Cactus-haunted, desert-wild,
Where the wide, bare bluffs and plains
Never with a harvest smiled,

The land that God forgot,
Barren with Oblivion's curse! —
Nay, it held a wealth, like gold
In a miser's wretched purse.

God forget? Through all the years,
As a father 'neath a vow,
He preserved its virgin worth
For its marriage with the Plow.

Harry Kemp



The Thrush

Through half a June day's flight,
Upon the prairie, thirsting for the showers
The cactus-blooms and prickly poppies white,
The fox-gloves and the pink-tinged thimble-flowers
Drooped in the Lord's great light.

Now suddenly, straight to the topmost spray
Of a wild-plum tree (I thereunder lying)

Darted a thrush and fided his roundelay
Whimsey on whimsey, not a stave denying.

Quoth I: "From regions measureless miles away,
He hears the sougning winds and rain-clouds flying;
And gathering sounds my duller ears refuse,
He sets the rills a-rush

This way and that to ripple me the news
(Right proud to have his little singing say!)
And brings the joy to pass with prophesying."
So gladly trilled the thrush!

Soon was I made aware
Of his small mate that from the Judas-tree
Dropped softly, flitting here and flitting there,
And would not seem to hear or seem to see.
He, in that upper air,
All mindful of her wayward wandering;
(Primrose and creamy-petaled larkspur bending
And yellow blossomed nettle, prone to sting!)
Shook out his red-brown wings as for descending



SUNFLOWERS

But lightly settled back, the more to sing.

“O bird!” I sighed, “thy heedless love befriending
With that celestial song-burst — whirling swift
As Phaeton’s chariot-rush!

Should my dear angel’s voice so downward drift
Quick would my music-lifted soul take wing!”

Now had earth’s happiest song a heavenly ending —
Sped, with his mate, the thrush.

Amanda T. Jones

Requiem

I am rambling with the rivers,
I am falling with the rain,
I am waving in the woodland,
I am growing in the grain.

I am marching in the zephyr,
I am rimpling in the rill,
I am blooming on the prairie —
But I live in Kansas still.

Eugene F. Ware



SUNFLOWERS

Sunflowers

I saw a field of sunflowers
 When all their bloom was shed,
A field of Kansas sunflowers
 All standing brown and dead,
They hovered there upon the hill;
And like a phantom crew,
The ghost of all the sunflowers
 The prairies ever grew
Came trooping toward me in a crowd,
Each shining through a misty shroud,
And flashed like fireflies thro' my brain
As once they lit the Kansas plain.

For I have known the sunflowers
 As well as mortals know;
They leaned to me, the sunflowers
 And whispered, long ago —
The things the sunflowers told me then,
Some day I'll tell the world again,
Some day when all their fairy band
Is banished out of Kansas land.

For they are of the sprite world,
 They are a fairy band,
They speak in mystic meanings
 We scarcely understand.
They sprang in shining lanes of gold
Across the prairies where of old



SUNFLOWERS

The "Forty-Niners" creaking wains
Went rutting through the grassy plains

And so were born the sunflowers,
The nymphs of earth and air;
They reached their arms imploring,
They tossed their golden hair;
They were a fairy band that cried,
"The gold is here on every side,"
And yet the argonauts went by
To vanish in the sunset sky.

My playmates were the sunflowers
Besides the sod house door,
They spread a sweet enchantment
That lured me evermore;
Their army queen, with shields ablaze
Went marching down the summer ways —
Across the mystic prairie land
Where Youth and I walked hand in hand.

The land grew full of cornstalks
That flapped against the sky,
The summer sun went running
Across the wheat and rye,
And nestling in the sunflower's shade
The wild canary's nest was made;
And every dream within me born
Was of the sunflowers and the corn.



SUNFLOWERS

The sound of splashing raindrops,
The whistle of the quail,
The roar of men and reapers,
The night hawk in the vale,
The crooning of the cradle song,
Out in the west where I belong,
A day that nevermore may be —
Is what the sunflowers say to me.

C. L. Edson

When She Was Born Upon That Kansas Hill

When she was born upon that Kansas Hill
Soft April tiptoed through the prairie grass,
Bidding the early meadow-larks be still
And listen for the coming soul to pass.
It came with soundless music from the deep,
Fulfilled with superhuman harmony
That charmed the waiting Easter-bells to sleep
And made them dream of mornings yet to be,
When she should romp that hill and greet the sun
With her clear treble and drink the spicy air
And pulse in time with all the life begun
In that soft season of what is sweet and fair.
Oh, there was joy enough that April morn
Over the Kansas Hill where she was born!

William Herbert Carruth



SUNFLOWERS

Pine Trees in Kansas

*"We go to rear a wall of men
On Freedom's Southern line,
And plant beside the cotton tree
The rugged Northern pine."*

Whittier

The cottonwood, own child of radiant spring,
Stands all aflutter in its shimmering green,
As not of Earth but of some realm serene
Where Winter never comes, and Light is king,
Whither its leafy pinions quivering,
Its upflung boughs in their soft silver sheen,
Seem ready to transport it when the keen
Arctural blasts stop its brief bourgeoning.
Behind it rise the pines in dull array,
Dark wintry aliens in a sunbright land;
Yet winter's strength their level boughs display,
Strength fitted winter's tempests to withstand;
And on them rests a glory past compare—
The fulfilled hope of those who set them there.

Rose Morgan



The Little Old Sod Shanty On the Claim

A FRONTIER SONG

Tune — "*The Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane.*"

I am looking rather seedy now, while holding down
my claim,

And my victuals are not always served the best,
And the mice ply slyly 'round me in my shanty on
the claim

As I lay me down alone at night to rest;
Yet I rather like the novelty of living in this way —
Though my bill-of-fare is always rather tame —
For I'm happy as a clam, on this land of Uncle Sam
In my little old sod shanty on the claim.

CHORUS

*The hinges are of leather, and the windows have no
glass,*

*While the roof it lets the howling blizzards in;
And I hear the hungry coyote, as he sneaks up thro'
the grass,*

Round my little old sod shanty on the claim.

But when I left my Eastern home, so happy and so
gay,

To try and win my way to wealth and fame,



I little thought that I'd come down to burning twisted
hay

In my little old sod shanty on the claim.
My clothes are plastered o'er with dough, I'm look-
ing like a fright,
And everything is scattered 'round the room;
And I fear if P. T. Barnum's man of me should get
a sight,
He would take me from my little cabin home.

I wish that some kind-hearted miss would pity on
me take,

In this mess, and extricate me from the same;
The angel! how I'd bless her, if this her home she'd
make

In my little old sod shanty on the claim;
And when we'd made our fortune on the prairies of
the West,

Just as happy as two bed-bugs we'd remain;
And we'd forget our trials and our troubles while
we'd rest

In our little old sod shanty on the claim.

If now and then a little heir to bless our lives was
sent,

Our hearts with honest pride to cheer and flame,
We would surely be content for the years that we
had spent

In our little old sod shanty on the claim.



SUNFLOWERS

And after years elapse and all those little chaps
To men and honest womanhood have grown,
It won't seem half so lonely if a dozen cozy cots
Surround our old sod shanty on the claim.

CHORUS

*The hinges are of leather, and the windows have no
glass,
While the roof it lets the howling blizzards in,
'And I hear the hungry coyote, as he sneaks up thro'
the grass,
Round my little old sod shanty on the claim.*

Anonymous

The Red Bird

Be the weather never so cold, we hear
Your voice in the tree-tops, trombone clear:
"Come out in the bitter!" — "Now what do you
fear?"
But ever your challenge, bright trumpeter, varies:
"Come hither!" — "Come hurry!" — "Come see
the green prairies!"
"Wild roses!" — "Primroses!" — "Blue vetches!"
"S—o n—e—a—r!"

Amanda T. Jones



SUNFLOWERS

The Song of the Kansas Emigrant

We cross the prairies as of old
The Pilgrims crossed the sea,
To make the West, as they the East,
The homestead of the free.

CHORUS

*The homestead of the free, my boys,
The homestead of the free,
To make the West, as they the East,
The homestead of the free.*

We go to rear a wall of men
On Freedom's Southern line,
And plant beside the cotton tree
The rugged Northern pine.

We're flowing from our native hills,
As our free rivers flow;
The blessings of our mother-land
Is on us as we go.

We go to plant her common schools
On distant prairie swells,
And give the Sabbaths of the wild
The music of her bells.



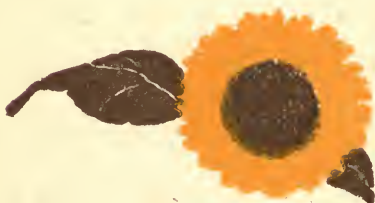
SUNFLOWERS

Upbearing, like the ark of old,
The Bible in her van,
We go to test the truth of God
Against the fraud of man.

No pause, nor rest, save where the streams
That feed the Kansas run,
Save where our pilgrim gonfalon
Shall flout the setting sun.

We'll tread the prairies as of old
Our fathers sailed the sea;
And make the West, as they the East,
The homestead of the free.

John G. Whittier





SUNFLOWERS

Stay West, Young Man

Out of the West they called me, and I turned my
face to the East,
And there was pride in my going, as a bridegroom
goes to the feast;
Here in the land of legend and the region of
romance
I should sit at the feet of learning and charter
thought's advance;
For every eastern hill-top was sacred and divine
To the humble prairie plow-boy who sought in the
East a sign.

Out of the East I turn me — God, what my eyes have
seen!
From a land of degenerate farmers, from the Land
of the Might-Have-Been,
From the narrow hills of learning where the
lamp of truth goes out
And the still, small voice of the spirit is drowned
in the vulgar shout,
From a land of wanton cities and dread night things
that prey,
I turn my face to the West-land — God, give me one
prairie day!



SUNFLOWERS

Give me the blaze of sunshine, give me the open sky,
The crude, young strength of manhood undrained in
harlotry;

Give me a voice that thunders and wisdom to
restrain

The flail of honest anger and pity for men's pain,
Give me the faith of Kansas and a few young men
I know,

And we'll carry the gates of Gaza and shatter Jericho.

The East is an ulcered carcass, bedecked like a
courtesan,

The West, like a boy, has heard her call and flushed
through his coat of tan,

He has spent, like Samson, his body's strength
for a gaudy finger ring

And the East has fettered him body and soul
with a rope of twisted string;

But I cannot keep in silence the things my eyes have
seen

As I turn to the youth of Kansas from the Land of
the Might-Have-Been.

Willard Wattles



SUNFLOWERS

A Challenge to Youth

Lo, I will shape you a song for only the strong to
sing,
And swift are its words and sure as the hammered
sword of a king,
And the grip of my hand is stern as I turn to its
fashioning.

You who are young and clean and sweetened by the
sun,
Who have followed the binder afield till the blind-
ing day was done
And the sheaves of beaten gold were garnered every
one,

Who have slept 'neath the open sky and pillowed a
dusty head
On the shiny saddle-leather, nor wished for a better
bed,
For you is the music moulded, for you is the anvil
red.

I sing you the song of Kansas, of reaper, brand, and
spade.
The sword of youth more splendid than Alexander's
blade,
The flag of faith transcendant in a mighty last
Crusade.



SUNFLOWERS

For I have seen the cities that loom over eastern
seas,
And trodden the purple vintage of ancient revel-
ries,
Where the simpering grin of Bacchus is the mask of
miseries.

The midnight reeled with laughter of rioting women
and men,
Sleek waiters tiptoed after and brimmed the glasses
again,
Till the night was a blare of ragtime and red with
lust and pain.

For this is the brood of the cities, elegant, deb-
onair,
Men with the scars of license and women with shoul-
ders bare —
But I have swung in the saddle and swallowed the
prairie air.

The tang of the sun-dried grasses, the spangled cup
of the sky,
The yelp of a hundred devils that shriek in the
coyote's cry,
And forty miles of freedom and the moon to canter
by.

For I have walked the corn-rows that are so cool
and green,



SUNFLOWERS

And I have found the nesting dove under the bur-
dock screen,
And many other wondrous things that no one of
these has seen.

Oh, none beside the farmer boy who walks the rows
of corn,
When blowing winds are ministers that sound a
silver horn,
And dreams bud like the prairie rose upon a fairy
thorn.

But now I sound to battle and brazen the notes are
blown,
You whom the sun has strengthened, follow — the
flag is flown!
And if you will not follow, I'll spur to the charge
alone.

Lo, this is the song I shape you, a song for the strong
and fleet,
A sword for the arms that wrestle with slippery
shocks of wheat,
A flag of the dreams of Kansas by wide winds win-
nowed sweet.

A sword for the youth of Kansas, a song for their
lips to sing,



SUNFLOWERS

The reckless sword of manhood, blue steel from the
furnacing,
Oh, who will dare to wear it, still fresh from its
fashioning?

Willard Wattles

Manhood

*Out of the reek and swelter, out of the sink of shame,
Shape us the perfect manhood that leaps like a living
flame.*

The Old World's foul corruption is poured on our
naked shores,
And the soul of the nation festers, ulcerate with sores.
The sons of the Pilgrim Fathers, on the hills their
fathers trod,
Have reared Gomorrah and Sodom in the face of
their father's God;
And the land of the bloody meadows, of slaughtered
brother and son
Is foul with the nameless vintage of perished
Babylon.
The fields of folly are ripened, red and shameless
and bold;
The harvest is ready for reaping, and Esau's birth-
right sold.



SUNFLOWERS

The brave little *Mayflower* breasted the thundering
leagues of foam,
But the peoples she engendered have builded a modern
Rome.

Rome of the corybantic worship of Orsiris,
Rome of the leprous satyr and dumb Astarte's kiss.
The land of Standish and Edwards, Revere and
Nathan Hale,
Has clanged to the clamoring cymbals in the hands
of the priests of Baal.

Better the blast of sirocco and a sudden terrible
death
Than to dwell in the tents of the godless and suckle
a harlot's breath.
Better a nation perish, root and blossom and branch,
Whelmed by the mighty thunder of God's great
avalanche,
Than to rear in perfumed cities a brood with feeble
chins
Whose delicate fingers tickle emasculate violins,
Where palaces of marble rise over Eastern seas
And people starve, while wantons batten on luxuries.

*Out of America's sorrow, out of America's shame,
Shape us, O God, the manhood that leaps like a living
flame!*

Willard Wattles



An Epic for Kansas

*For the Eunice Sterling Chapter of the Daughters
of the American Revolution, Wichita.*

I have stood on the hill where Warren looked out
over Charlestown Bay
When the confident British frigates opened the fate-
ful fray
And the red-coats stormed the bulwarks on an un-
forgotten day.

From a swarm of Italian children rises the old
North spire
Where Robert Newman mounted to kindle the beacon
fire
And hang in his rusty lanterns the star of a new
empire.

And I have passed beneath it to where on the silent
hill
Old Cotton Mather slumbers, and his thundering
voice is still
That sentenced the Salem witches and wrought his
shame-red will.

And northward in the harbor, though the steadfast
masts are bare,



SUNFLOWERS

I have climbed to the *Constitution* over an oaken
stair
And stroked the immortal cannon that silenced the
Guerriere.

Old Ironsides rides at anchor and her mightier chil-
dren creep
Home from the far-flung ocean that the war-dogs
guard and keep,
The terrible, steel-shod gray-hounds that harry the
flanks of the deep.

Old Ironsides in harbor, and every voyage done,
Home from the screaming shrapnel and death-ex-
haling gun,
Home where heroes slumber with Prescott and
Washington.

What have we in Kansas, we of the Golden West,
To equal their deeds of glory and kindle a patriot's
breast
With tales of wild night-riding, and names by a
nation blessed?

Is all of the wonder vanished? Are all of the dreams
forgot,
All of the stress of battle when blood is stream-
ing hot



SUNFLOWERS

And the dead undying squadrons go down in a crimson blot?

Not alone in the trenches where throbbing war-drums beat

Are mustered the nation's heroes from ranks of the strong and fleet,

But out of the feeble marchers on bruised and lagging feet.

And we of the West have vanquished the stubborn lonely plain

And stormed the heights of famine and foundered the ships of pain

And clothed with an emerald garment the ancient scars of Cain.

Never a trumpet sounded, never a blast was blown
When the pioneers of Kansas marched out to a field unknown

And fronted drought and hunger, unheralded and lone.

What of the days of struggle, the young corn shriveled sear

With scarcely a blade left glossy and never a full-formed ear,

And Care to eat at your table, and you made a bed with Fear?



SUNFLOWERS

Never a church-bell ringing, scarcely a passing
friend,
Till it seemed you had walked forever and reached
the horizon-end;
And ever the treeless prairie and the blazing skies
that bend

Down like a copper furnace, and the wind that
burned and stung
The white-washed, one-roomed shanty where the
withered moon-vine clung;
And you wondered if you had dreamed it that once
you were gay and young.

What have we in Kansas, sprung from those pio-
neers?
A story of deeds our fathers wrought through the
barren years,
A tale that our mothers sweetened with a baptism
of tears.

Give me the strength to sing it, the epic of our
dead,
The legend of their glory and the armies vanquished;
Their battle-fields of anguish bearing a nation's
bread,

And those who have knelt in homage before an
eastern shrine



SUNFLOWERS

Shall shake to a mightier music and pledge with a
ruddier wine

The pioneers of Kansas — Come, touch your cup to
mine.

Willard Wattles

The Old Timer

You've built up quite a city here, with stately
business blocks, and wires a-running far and near
and handsome concrete walks. The trolley cars go
whizzing by, and smoke from noisy mills is trailing
slowly to the sky, and blotting out the hills. And
thirty years ago I stood upon this same old mound,
with not a house of brick or wood for twenty miles
around. I'm mighty glad to be alive, to see the
change you've made; it's good to watch this human
hive, and hear the hum of trade!

I list to the moans and wails
Of your town, with its toiling hands,
But O for the lonely trails
That led to the unknown lands!

I used to camp right where we stand, among these
motor cars, and silence brooded o'er the land as I
lay 'neath the stars, save when the drowsy cattle
lowed, or when a broncho neighed; and now you
have an asphalt road, and palaces of trade. We hear
the clamor of the host on every wind that blows,



SUNFLOWERS

where people take the time to boast of how their city grows! I do not doubt that you will rise to greater heights of fame, and maybe paint across the skies your city's lustrous name!

I list to the ceaseless tramp
Of the host, with its hopes and fears;
But O for the midnight camp
And the sound of the milling steers!

Walt Mason

To the Wild Verbena

Verbenas blue, verbenas shining white,
Verbenas of a rich, pulse-quickenning red
Grow here together in my garden bed,
Weaving their tangled mats for my delight;
Yet do I take less joyance in the sight
Of all their beauty, lavishly outspread,
Than in contemplating thy lowlihead,
O wild verberia, modestly bedight.
Theirs our flag's bright colors, your dull hue
Is aboriginal; the primal clay
Tinges your petals; grateful for scanty dew,
Patient of sun, you bear the scorching ray
That withers them. Sweet wildling, but for you
Where now had been their red, their white, their
blue?

Rose Morgan



Out of the Kansas Dust

Out of the dust of Kansas,
 In old, primeval days,
Out of the shroud of a drifting cloud
 Across its grassy ways,
Flaunting the flag of the prairie dust,
 The shaggy bisons graze;
Over a landscape red with rust
The herds emerge from the Kansas dust.

Treading the dust of Kansas,
 Before she knew her name;
Standing aghast at the vernal vast,
 The spying Spaniard came.
And his armour scales in the grassy vales
 Gleamed out like an oriflamme,
As he sought for the fabled city, thrust
Afar in the phantom desert's dust.

Trailing the dust of Kansas,
 The Forty-Niners went;
Over the grass their oxen pass,
 With their drovers, travel-spent.
And the weary weep their souls to sleep,
 And lie in a grassy tent,
While the rest press on with feverish lust,
For the sunset land and its yellow dust.



SUNFLOWERS

Into the dust of Kansas
 Went tribe and caravan ;
All swallowed up in the desert's cup
 That drank them, horse and man.
And the vision bold and the dream of gold,
 It died as it began.
And the dreamer's heart turned mold and must
And drifted dead in the dreamless dust.

Out of the dust of Kansas
 The marching dead return —
Beneath the beat of their spectral feet
 The springing poppies burn !
And out of their tomb the towers loom
 Like genii from an urn.
The burnished cities are skyward thrust,
Rending the veil of the Kansas dust.

Out of the dust of Kansas,
 They lift the voice of song ;
Out of her heart the visions start
 That lead the world along !
Her sons have eaten the mystic bread
 That makes a people strong.
And He whom the stumbling nations trust
Is salting the world with the Kansas dust.

George T. and C. L. Edson



SUNFLOWERS

The Real Foreign Invasion

I'm going to quit the farm, Bill, my farming days
are done —

The young ones all have left me to swell the city
tide;

My years have passed the zenith and life's declining
sun

Is gleaming from the Westward across the
prairies wide.

I've cattle in the feed lots and porkers in the shed,
And hayracks and haystacks and cribs of Kansas
corn —

But, O, it seems a pity, all the boys have sought the
city,

And none would stay to till the soil, the land
where they were born.

I've seen my children leave me and then those of all
my neighbors,

And then I saw my neighbors go, and foreign
farmers came;

And the cattle at the mangers knew the accents of
the strangers,

And the English tongue is silenced and the land
is not the same.



SUNFLOWERS

Of all the old Americans that settled up this country,

The boys that were my comrades when your dad
was green as May,

Who made the old days merry as we broke the
virgin prairie —

They are sleeping 'neath the limestone or they've
wandered far away.

I have seen the dark Bohemians come creeping 'all
around me —

McCracken sold and Jenks sold, and Rabbit
Smith he died;

And then there came a season when to sell it seemed
a treason,

For the native crowd began to fear the sweeping
foreign tide.

For every time a farm was sold a foreigner would
take it,

Well I remember Sod Corn Jones, the way it
hurt his pride —

On the homestead that he founded, when at last he
was surrounded,

By the men from Southern Europe joining
fence on every side.

Forty years have rolled above me, years of drought
and years of plenty,



SUNFLOWERS

Since we steered our covered wagon through
the blue stem of this state;
And each fellow stuck his mug out of the sod con-
structed dugout,
And began the task of harnessing the caprices
of fate.

We had claimed a virgin country where no plow had
kissed the grass roots;
We were first to come with hamestraps and with
wheels and plowing gear,
And the hoppers and the blizzards couldn't daunt our
youthful gizzards,
For our army days were over, but our fighting
line was here.

Of the boys that whipped the prairie in the days of
"little eating,"
When the rabbit was our savior and we cooked
with "prairie coal,"
Not a one is left to cheer me as the evil days come
near me,
And the flag of my surrender hangs half-masted
at the pole.

O'er yon hilltop is the village one time filled with
Yankee fellows,
Where we used to loaf in summer when the corn
was in the ear;



SUNFLOWERS

There the strangers now are thronging and my heart
is crushed with longing,
As I wander through the village and no native
accents hear.

I have kept the vow I promised; I'm the lest to leave
my birthright;
I'm the last whose tongue knows English, and
my eyes are wet with tears;
For last week old Bill Deventer took the train from
Richland Center,
And the last link broke that bound me to those
early Kansas years.

I had hoped my children's children here would till
these fertile acres,
Tend the cattle on the hillsides and the clover
in the dales;
And we've all reared boys a-plenty, but when they
reached one and twenty,
City-ward they went a-flying down yon reach
of shining rails.

Strange, glum men from o'er the ocean, with their
wasteful farming methods,
Till those farms that Yankee muscle once made
laugh a harvest tide;
And where Rabbit Smith lies sleeping, alien feet go
creeping, creeping,



SUNFLOWERS

And the plow whose kisses curse us spreads its
desolation wide.

Sod Corn Jones whose magic foresight proved that
new turned sod was able
To yield up a hundred bushels to the acre cropped
in maize;
In his grave he must be burning, with a frenzy and a
yearning,
For his land is surely turning — desert tilled in
fatal ways.

Who will save this land from ruin, from the dust
storm and the famine;
Why have all our farm-bred children spurned
their father's native soil?
Why is English no more spoken in the fields our
plows have broken?
Must my land be ripped to bedrock, now that
I'm too old to toil?

I had hoped some son returning from the wage war
in the city
Would take up this rich dominion I have battled
for so long;
So that in the summer weather, Ma and I could sit
together
And could watch the browsing cattle and could
hear the harvest song.

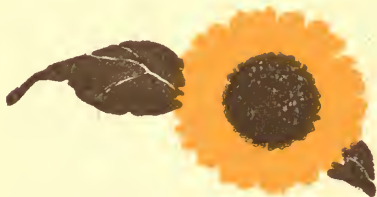


SUNFLOWERS

One by one our children left us, one by one our
friends departed,
Till no soul that knew the rapture of the conquest
of the grass
Is beside us at the parting, none to see the tear-drops
starting,
But I've kept the vow I promised, and my time
has come to pass.

Fare you well, my Kansas acres, when the sun comes
up tomorrow,
Strangers' eyes shall lift to greet you, strangers'
feet my fields shall tread;
And the long teeth of the river, they shall gnaw these
hills forever,
And God help my city children in the hour they
ask for bread.

C. L. Edson





SUNFLOWERS


Kansas

Give me the land where miles of wheat
Ripple beneath the wind's light feet,
Where the green armies of the corn
Sway in the first sweet breath of morn;
Give me the large and liberal land
Of the open heart and the generous hand.
Under the widespread Kansas sky
Let me live and let me die.

Harry Kemp

The Gradgerraton' of Joe

Way down crost the meadow an' cow-lot,
Thro' paths made by cattle an' sheep,
Where, cooled in the shade by the tall ellums made,
The old crick has curled up to sleep;
Down there where the wind sighun' mingles
'Ith prattelun' waters at play,
And the coo coo coo' of the turtle-dove too,
Seeps in from the dim far away;
Down there by the banks of the Willer —
In spring where the sweet-williams grow —
'Twas at this place 'at he all the time used to be —
The home of our little boy Joe.
My oh —
How long ago.

A decorative header at the top of the page features a stylized sun with a bright orange glow, partially obscured by dark, leafy shapes on either side. Below this illustration is a horizontal line.

SUNFLOWERS

Nope; none o' you couldn't a' knowed him,
Way back there in seventy-four,
When Idy an' me concluded 'at we
'Ud edjicate Joe, rich or pore.
I mind how we skimped, scraped, an' worried,
An' how our first Christmas was dim,
An' how mother cried when we had to decide,
We couldn't send nothin' to him.
An' nobidy else dreams the sorrow
'At Idy an' me'd undergo,
A livin' that way all alone ever' day,
A yearnun' an' longun' fer Joe.
High O.
Long ago.

So Idy an' me went together,
To hear little Joe gradgerrate;
Little Joe, did I say? Meant big, anyway;
He spoke on the subject of "Fate."
An' my! but the "effort was splendid,"
The folks said 'at set by my side,
But I never hurd a sentence 'er word —
An' mother jest broke down an' cried.
I hadn't the heart fer to ask her
What was the matter, you know;
Fer I felt she'd 'a' said: "Our baby is dead,
I want back my own little Joe:
Our Joe
Of long ago."



SUNFLOWERS

So foller me down thro' the cow-lot —
 Thro' paths made by cattle an' sheep,
To where in the shade by the tall ellums made
 The old creek is tucked in to sleep;
Where sighs of the tired breeze whisper
 To quiet the waters at play;
An' the dreamy coo coo of the turtle-dove true
 Frightens care-phantoms away;
Fer I like to set hyur a thinkun',
 An' astun the waters 'at play,
What's come o' the dear little boy 'at played here
 In the days o' the long ago?
 Our Joe;
 High ho!

William 'Allen 'White

The Little Tree

In a fair branching sisterhood,
Protecting each other as sisters should,

The crabapple trees in the hollow stand,
Closely crowding, hand in hand.

But on the hilltop's barren crest,
Sundered far from all the rest,

Whipt by all the winds that blow,
Five little trees together grow.



SUNFLOWERS

They put out their hands, but cannot reach,
For all their striving, each to each.

Thus the others could not aid
When a direful stroke at one was made —

A stroke that maimed the little tree
And left her praying not to be —

A piteous sight for who might pass,
Her topmost twigs in the matted grass.

But when fair Spring came by that way,
Could the tree her bidding mild gainsay?

One weakling bud was left her still —
She put it forth with a quickening will.

Now here she stands, a cripple bent,
Calm with wild Nature's calm content;

And when again the thrushes sing,
She'll hold her nosegay out to Spring.

Somehow, fairest of all I find
The little tree that would not be —
But changed her mind.

Rose Morgan



On the Links

Said the locust trees to the sycamore tree,
"You are one, but two are we."

It is not good to stand alone ;
Go get you back unto your own."

To the locust trees said the sycamore tree,
"Heaven set me here where all may see ;

My leaves are the swift rain's castanet ;
As a harp for the wind my boughs are set ;

From my topmost twig the redbird sings,
Below flits his brother with bluebird wings ;

And in the shade I must spread at my feet
Prances the robin with motion fleet ;

While for them and for you my pendulums mark
The lightfoot moments from dawn to dark.

These are the tasks I am set to do ;
For companionship Heaven gave me — *you*."

Said the locust trees to the sycamore tree,
"One are you, but we are three."

Rose Morgan



The Maverick

There is wonder in the wander-lust that sets the
feet to roaming,
And love has met me on the road and sweetened all
the gloaming ;
Still, hard it is to walk so far, the while my heart is
homing
For the West-land, the best land, the land that gave
me birth,
The wide and sunny prairie-land, the fairest land of
earth,

Oh, hills are kind and comforting, and spicy woods
are clean,
And there's familiar friendship in the homely dales
between,
But I have seen the sunflower in a dress of dusty
green,
The sunflower, the one flower, the flower that gypsies
wear
When they go singing down the years, with star-dust
in their hair.

Oh, every road in Kansas-land is walled about with
gold,
And overhead the August sun is like a lord of old
A-riding down to Palestine, and staunch is he to
hold



SUNFLOWERS

The West way, the best way, the way that I would
take

If I could scale these sullen walls where all my
lances break.

The hills of Massachusetts are a-bud with early
spring,

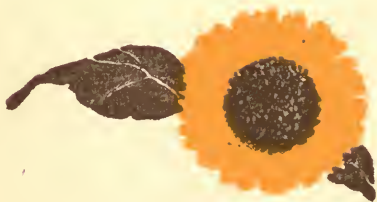
But it's little that I reckon or care for all their bur-
geoning;


For my heart is at the stirrup and I feel the pommel
swing —

The West-land, the blessed land, I hear the homing
call,

The wide and sunny prairie-land, the fairest land
of all.

Willard Wattles





SUNFLOWERS

Threshing Time

I

There's dew on the stubble and fog in the air,
And a red eye peeps over the hill,
And a white flag of steam, flaring up with a scream,
Has awakened the dull, drowsing doves from their
dream

On the aged, gray granary sill.
And through dew on the grasses and fog in the air,
The throng of the threshers is gathering there.
With toiling and tugging, and lifting and lugging,
They belt the steam engine that's wheezing and
chugging —

And pitchforks are gleaming and laborers laugh,
Preparing to hurry the wheat from the chaff.

The smoke and the vapor float over the trees,
And a stamping horse rattles a chain;
And men with red handkerchiefs looped at their
throats

Are climbing the mountains of barley and oats,
The beautiful Alps of the grain.

The smoke and the vapor floats over the trees,
And the sun now has routed the fog on the breeze,
While creaking and turning, and slapping and
churning,

The belted red thresher has lisped out its yearning —



SUNFLOWERS

Has mumbled its hunger in mournfulest note,
And the first sheaf is ground in its ravenous throat.

II

“Look out, fellers. Let 'er go!
Pitch them first few bundles slow.
Hold on, son, don't gash my hands
When you're cuttin' off them bands.
Wheat's a-spilling. Hey, you Jack!
Run that cussed wagon back!
Grab a wheel, Bill, help him there.
We ain't got no wheat to spare.
Wheat's too high now, I'll be bound,
To thresh and throw it on the ground.
Belt 's off now! And I just said
You boys would get her over-fed.
You mustn't try to rush her through;
The straw's still tough and damp with dew.
When the sun gets two hours high
You will find it's plenty dry.
All right, let 'er go again;
Now we're threshin' out the grain.
See how plump them berries is;
That's the stuff that does the biz.
That there wheat's from college seed
Of selected Turkey breed;
The land was fall plowed just as soon —
All right, boy, she's blowed for noon.
Ease her down and hold her steady,
Women folks says grub is ready.”



SUNFLOWERS

III

Now the thirsty sun swings lower on his torrid path
to earth,

And the yellow straw is piling toward the sky.
Say, a feller learns at threshin' what a drink of
water's worth,
For it tastes as sweet as cider when you're dry.

At last the sun is setting, just a crimson ball of fire,
And a coolness all the atmosphere pervades;
The stalwart feeder's dusty arms at last begin to
tire,

And the last sheaf passes downward through the
blades.

Now the whistle's long-drawn wailing is a song of
seraphim,

And the stars light up in heaven's purple deep;
And the smoking and the joking, how it rests the
weary limb

Ere bedtime ushers in the perfect sleep.

IV

The day is over,
The world is fed.
'And the farmer sleeps
On his feather bed.'

C. L. Edson



On the Farm

How sweet to lean on Nature's arm,
And jog through life upon the farm;
Merchants and brokers spread a dash
A little while, then go to smash;
But we can keep from day to day
The even tenor of our way.

*(There go those horses! Quick, John, catch 'em.
They'll break their necks! You didn't hitch 'em.)*

How sweet and shrill the plow-boy's song,
As merrily he jogs along;
The playful breeze about him whirls,
And tosses wide his yellow curls.
His hands are brown, his cheeks are red —
An ever-blooming flower-bed.
Unspoiled by crowds, unvexed by care —
(Goodness! do hear the urchin swear!)

How soft the summer showers fall,
On field and garden, cheering all;
How bright in woods the diamond sheen,
Of rain-drops strung on threads of green —
Each oak a king with jewel crown.
*(The wind has blown the haystack down!
I knew 'twould hail, it got so warm.
That fence is flat. My! what a storm!)*



SUNFLOWERS

How soft the hazy summer night!
On dewy grass the moon's pale light
Rests dreamily. It falls in town
On smoky roofs and pavements brown.
How tenderly when night is gone,
Breaks o'er the fields the summer dawn!
How sweet and pure the scented morn.
(Get up! Old Molly's in the corn!)

Far from the city's dust and broil,
We women sing at household toil,
Nor scorn to work with hardened hands;
We laugh at fashion's bars and bands,
And on our cheeks wear nature's rose.
*(That calf is nibbling at my clothes!
Off she goes at double shuffle,
Chewing down my finest ruffle!)*

We workers in our loom of life,
Far from the city's din and strife,
Weave many a soft, poetic rose,
With patient hand through warp of prose;
We love our labor more and more.
*(John! here! the pigs are at the door!
They've burst the sty and scaled the wall—
There goes my kettle, soap and all!)*

Ellen P. Allerton



SUNFLOWERS

A Regular Dry Spell

Said Uncle Bye to Judson Nye,
“Well, old top, it’s sure some dry,
Oats aren’t more than a half-inch high.
When you goin’ a get your corn laid by?”

“Talk about dry,” said Neighbor Nye,
“Why, I’ve scorched my eye like an oyster fry,
Peeling that orb at the red-hot sky
Watching for clouds, but they don’t drift by.
Here it is close to the Fo’t July.
Can you lay corn by when it ain’t knee-high?”

“Corn’s awful backward sure this year;
Don’t look like it could make an ear.
The Lord, He’s watching each green young
spear,
And my corn’s just as good as the rest ’round
here.

It’s clean as the floor of a barn, darn near.
The growth is slow, I admit that’s so;
But in nary a row does the least weed show,
It’s so plumb darn dry that the weeds can’t
grow!”

Uncle Bye said, “If you’re asking me,
I swan, I swear that I *never* did see
Such a *long* dry spell. And so hot, too. Gee!



SUNFLOWERS

But 'twas just like this in ninety-three.
It cut off raining away in May,
Had to use scissors to cut the hay.
Some of it short as a goslin's fuzz,
We lathered and shaved like a barber does;
Corn rolled up like a cigarette;
A chap could have smoked the stuff, I bet.
I tell you what, if you b'lieve my words,
Little chicks grew up to full-sized birds,
Summer-born calves they were five feet tall,
And never yet seen one raindrop fall!
Hay was twenty-five dollars a ton,
Cash couldn't get it, 'cause there wasn't none.
Yet here is the fact that seems so queer,
That was a scandalous big peach year.
They grew everywhere that the eye could see,
On any bush claiming to be a tree;
You could drive right along beside the road
And shake them off by the wagon load.
Though it's dry and hot, I tell you what,
Peaches can stand a terrible lot.
If it rains this year, some time 'fore fall,
There'll be peaches to throw at the birds,
that's all."

C. L. Edson



SUNFLOWERS

The Farmer

The farmer is a man of wit,
There's a simply no denying it!
He leads a life of pampered ease,
And is as happy as you please.

At 9 o'clock he's ready for
His morning rolls and *cafe noir*;
And when the gourmet thus is fed,
His valet helps him out of bed.
From 10 to 1 he reads the news,
The market tips and trade reviews;
To corn and wheat his heed he gives,
For 'tis by these the farmer lives.

So having figured for the day
Which way the markets he will play,
His batch of daily bread is made
By dealing on the Board of Trade.
His daily labor being through,
The farmer takes his lunch at 2;
Then donning riding-garb, he'll call
His favorite motor from the stall.

He rides about to view his farm,
And feel the restful country's charm.
His wife, with paints and sketching pad,
And all the trinkets of her fad,



SUNFLOWERS

Her ease! sets beneath the tree,
And paints the view from 2 to 3;
At 6 o'clock they dine in state—
The farming life is simply great!

The products of the earth and air
Are on the table groaning there.
Sweet milk is always at their hand,
Bought by the case all neatly canned.
The trolley line that rattles down,
It brings them butter fresh from town,
And eggs and luscious chicken fries,
The best the city's mart supplies;

Green truck and fruit all crisp and nice,
Just taken from cold storage ice;
And juicy, luscious ham, O my!
The best the packers can supply.
No wonder life upon the farm
Has always held so rare a charm!
The cry of "Rube!" which town folks shout,
Is only envy, inside out.

C. L. Edson



SUNFLOWERS

Butchering Day

High through the sky see the homing birds sailing —
It's butchering time.

Frost on the fences, on picket and paling —
Hear the weird winter wind whining and wailing,
The warmth and the daylight are fitting and
failing —
It's hog-killing time.

The season of feasting has come with the fall,
And the digging of yams.
The corn-fattened oxen are sleek in the stall
And the hogs are all hams.
The hands of the harvest have come from their
toiling,
They've set the black pot full of water a-boiling,
There's a jangle of knives and the whetstone they're
oiling —
It's butchering time.

The women have laid down their sewin' and stitchin',
There's a stir in the place —
And their laughter and chatter reflects from the
kitchen —
The joy of the chase.
For old primal passions are stirring again,
And a wave of the cave-dweller days on their ken



SUNFLOWERS

Lures them keen on the blood-sprinkled trail of the
men —
At butchering time.

The porker is squealing the pangs of his fear,
For the chase has grown hot.
His cry is like music to every ear,
It's a flash of the cave man pursuing the deer,
It's the lusty and blood-shedding time of the year,
And the moment of rapture and capture is here —
There's the sound of a shot.

The prey has gone down and the men with a shout
Plunge a knife in its heart and the life gurgles out,
In the old feeding lot.

And the women come out with a smile on each face
To their part in the task —

As our foremothers followed the men to the chase
In an age that is hid in the hazes of space
And Time's motionless mask.

But we know that the past surges back in our veins,
At the terrified cry,

And the fever of conquest lights up in our brains,
And the blood-lust in eye;

And the best day of all, in the lap of the fall,
With its multifold charm,

Is the thick of the fray upon butchering day —
On the farm.

C. L. Edson



SUNFLOWERS

My People

I have dwelt in a land of strangers where even the
sun is cold,

And the hills are damp with the sweat of age and
rotten with its mould;

The hemlocks stretch their shuddering arms where
ancient lichens cling,

And winter lingers the summer through in the lap of
the fainting spring.

The sad skies weep through the somber gloom that
gathers overhead

And the shadows close like a charnel-house when the
pallid day is dead;

But human creatures live and love and crumble with
the rains

Who never knew the madness of the sunshine in
their veins.

They never felt the touches of the south wind on
their faces

When down she sweeps upon them from the azured
open spaces;

They never saw the wild rose in a tangle at their
feet,

The bumble-bee that filches all her shyly treasured
sweet;

For them no tawny sunflowers with their crowns
of beaten gold



SUNFLOWERS

Have nodded through the summer sun like Spanish
kings of old;
They never stumbled in the grass upon the brown
quail's brood
And heard their frightened cheeping break the
prairie solitude.

But what of ye, my people, in the furrows where
you stand,
With your eyes of patient watching and the cheeks
that June has tanned?
Ye have turned with adoration toward the homeland
of your youth
And have worshipped in a childish faith the empty
husks of Truth;
With the confidence of children ye have followed
from afar
And eastward turned your yearnings as the Wise
Men to the Star;
Ye do not know as I know all the empty, faithless
shrines
And the altars where the sodden priests are drunk
with wanton wines.

Ye do not know as I know all the glory of the West,
(Or is it that ye know it well and leave it unex-
pressed?)
I am one with ye, my people, of the rough, work-
hardened hands,



SUNFLOWERS

Have trod the furrows ye have trod across the level
lands,
Have felt the hot wind's fevered breath when cloud
on cloud was arched,
While all the earth cried out for rain and every
throat was parched.
In reverence I bow me down before those patient
eyes
That see across the shriveled corn a rainbow in
the skies.

Is it wonder, then, my people, that we storm the
heights of God?
For they know Him best who build for Him an altar
from the sod.
Is it wonder that our dreamers who have died the
death of shame,
As John Brown on the gallows-tree, have set the
world aflame?
We are young, but through our pulses leaps a flood
from heroes' veins,
Men who struck in flaming anger at the Southland's
slaving chains;
Then to homely ploughshares forging every battle-
gleaming blade,
They have wrestled in the desert with an Angel
undismayed.

Day by day the dread endeavor, muscles tense and
faces grim,



SUNFLOWERS

With the prairie like a caldron banded by a brazen
rim:

Now the corn in rich abundance heals the ancient
scars of pain,

And the wheat-field's golden deluge overflows the
fertile plain.

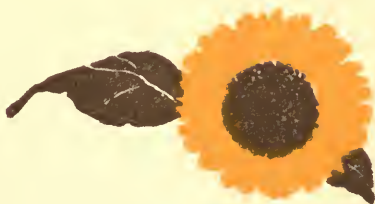
'Twas for love of us, my people, you and me, their
children still,

Though their toil-worn bodies slumber on the little,
lonely hill.

Lo, the eastern shrines are pallid, cursed as Cain
their sacrifice,

And we turn our faces westward where our own
white altars rise.

Willard Wattles





As a Tale That Is Told

This is the tale of Kansas, and this way her legends
run

From the dawn of the day on her eastern rim to the
going down of the sun;

Whatever is done in thy valleys, whatever is said on
thy heights,

Thy losses, and crosses, and sorrows; thy triumphs,
thy joys, and delights —

Tho' the deed be done in the shadow, and only a mur-
mur the word

The eyes of the nation behold it, the ear of the world
has heard.

As the Kaw runs to the Missouri, the Missouri
runs on to the sea

And their waters in misty beauty fall back from the
clouds on thee,

So the winds from the corners of heaven bring back
thy message to thee.

Out on the desolate highway that led to the Span-
iards' land

Went the unknown trader and trapper o'er the cac-
tus-fringed path of sand,

Where these wardens of commerce went building the
trail down to old Santa Fé,

With unmarked graves for their milestones over
stretches of wilderness gray,



Where the Pawnee Rock stood, a fortress, grim
citadel of the Plains,
Where the blood of Comanche victims the Cimarron
desert stains —
The Kaw has told the Missouri, the Missouri has told
the sea,
And the iron-clad engines of traffic today bring their
treasures to thee
From the Lakes to where the Sierras dip down to
the sunset sea.

Fertile and fair lay thy prairies, awaiting a pioneer's
hand
Sheltered by cottonwood branches, the brave little
cabin home stands
Where the staunch-hearted lover of freedom in an
unequaled terrible fight,
With the ruffian from over the Border has made his
last stand for the Right,
'Til defenseless he falls like a martyr in the wrath
of the torch's red glare —
Is there no voice to tell of this hero, no ear that will
list to a prayer?
Yes. The Kaw has told the Missouri, the Missouri
has told the sea,
And the roar of a thousand cannons on battlefields
thunder thy plea,
From that deed by the darkness enshrouded comes
the sunburst of liberty.



SUNFLOWERS

Here in the "short grass" country with distances
dreamy and wide

The sturdy young claim-holder builded a sod-covered
house for his bride.

Though the Cheyenne put on his war-bonnet and
went forth by bands to destroy

Though the drouth and the locust and cyclone joined
hands in a force to annoy

He planted his grain by all waters, his service can
never be told

And the seed that fell by the wayside has brought
forth a hundred fold.

For the Kaw has told the Missouri, the Missouri has
told the sea,

And food for the starving millions, thy broad-acred
bounty shall be

The toil begun at the "grass roots," brings riches
and honor to Thee.

Broad are thy skies, over-arching, and fair is thy
land to behold

Thy schools are the pride of thy people, thy churches
are manifold.

In the veins of thy sons, strong and noble, is the blood
of a pioneer line

And the demon they fight on thy border is the demon
that lurks in red wine.

And patiently still wait thy daughters, their God-
given rights to possess



SUNFLOWERS

When a citizenship universal thy brow with new
laurel shall dress

The Kaw will tell the Missouri, the Missouri will tell
the sea,

And the power that uplifts a nation, the leaven of
history

Through a whispered word on the prairie will shout
from the skies to thee.

The prophet, Ezekiel, has written that fronting to
Eastward stands

A house, from under whose threshold the waters
pour, healing all lands.

The fishermen of Engedi spread their nets and re-
joice day by day,

The trees on its banks never wither, the deserts with
blossoms are gay.

And so may we write of this Kansas, a house front-
ing still to the sun,

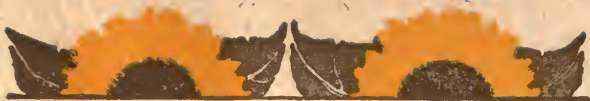
So long as its sons and its daughters shall do as their
fathers have done

While the Kaw runs to the Missouri, the Missouri
runs on to the sea,

The throb of the blossom-starred prairies, the pulse
of the world shall be,

And the limit no man shall measure, for the end is
Eternity.

Margaret Hill McCarter



SUNFLOWERS

The University of Kansas

They have throned her upon a hill-top, mother and
queen in one,
Bride of the skies at midnight, sister of the sun;
Crowned with the glory of wisdom, garlanded with
light,
With the stars in her shadowy tresses when she
sleeps in the arms of night,
With the stars in her shadowy tresses, and a million
lamps that gem
The undulant lines of her body to the fringe of her
garment hem.

To her feet from the far-flung prairie her loving
subjects press,
Sprung from the sun-browned heroes who peopled
a wilderness;
Lads on whose hearts are graven epics of toil
unsung.
Bolder than olden story boasted in golden tongue —
Bolder than knights of Arthur, braver than Charle-
magne,
The patient unchronicled warriors whose plowshare
conquered the plain.

Beside them kneel their sisters, womanly, strong
and true,



SUNFLOWERS

Their hearts aflame with a courage such as their
mothers knew
When they watched the hot winds shrivel the corn
in the swelling ear,
Yet smiled at the men who faltered when every
smile hid a tear;
Still smiled when the tiny invader set teeth to the
ripening wheat,
And the face of the sun was darkened, and ruin
seemed complete.

They have throned her upon a hill-top and her
scepter sways afar;
The ends of the earth acknowledge her wherever
her children are.
Never in pride of her glory may those she has
nourished forget
That not on the purple dais is her throne of dominion
set.
Not on the purple dais—May the sons of those
pioneers
Stand strong by their father's struggle and clean
by their mother's tears.

Willard Wattles



Kansas, Mother of Us All

Kansas, mother of us all,
Bosomed-deep, imperial,
Queen of states with dusty feet
Glowing through the ripening wheat;
Crowned with cloud, and amply free
In large motioned majesty;
Sky and prairie, circling plain,
Take us to thy breast again.

We, thy sons, have strengthened thews,
Fed on manna of thy dews,
And have laid our heads to rest
On thy slowly heaving breast,
Felt the vast tide of thy heart
All its silent peace impart.
Mother, we, the kernelled grain,
In thy bosom sink again.

We, thy daughters, lithe and tall,
Follow when our brothers call;
Eyes that see the right to do,
Hand to hold the rudder true,
Lip to set the seal of love
On thy sons who worthy prove.
Give us strength to bear thy pain,
Folded to thy side again.

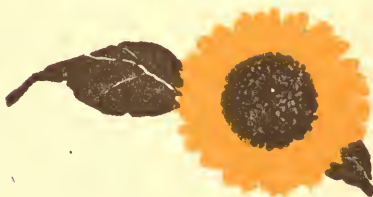


SUNFLOWERS

Over all the stubbled plain
Stretch low tents of yellow grain,
Rakish bumble-bees have wheeled,
Looting the alfalfa field;
And long lances of the corn
Storm the ramparts of the morn.
Lo, the sword that knows no stain
In a plough-share melts again.

Kansas, mother, what shall be
Guerdon fitting unto thee,
Who have bent and lifted up
To our lips a brimming cup?
We, thy children, dedicate
All our lives to make thee great.
Strength and sinew, heart and brain —
Lull at night to sleep again!

Willard Wattles





The Prairie-Sleeper

I have so many friends. God sends them to me
As freely as He sends the sun or rain.
The very winds of Heaven seem to woo me
With all their wild, sweet ecstasy of pain.
The silent stars of Heaven stoop unto me
And with their fellowship my strength is slain
As I lie out beneath the skies that dew me
All night upon the wind-swept Kansas plain,
Till all the comradeship of earth ebbs through me
Like surge of tide upon the restless main.

A thousand voices of the crickets cry me
Quaint serenades that are unheard by day;
The wind comes by on tip-toe, seems to try me,
Touching with cooling finger-tips that stray
Along my body to my bosom shyly,
Then, like a startled maiden, slips away,
Brushing my flushed cheeks as she scampers by me
With musty fragrance from a heavy spray
Of goldenrod that drowsily nods nigh me—
Sweet wind that loves me far too well to stay.

Above, the stars across the empty spaces
Fling clustered silver diadems of light;
Like queen who on her lover's forehead places
Her coronal, so kings me now the Night,



SUNFLOWERS

And I forget my hopes and my disgraces
In my new wonder at such vast delight;
Until, from deeps beyond star-deeps, there races
Her fire-haired messenger enrobed in white
And 'round each circling sun the friendly faces
Of God's far universe burst into sight.

Lord of the Night and all her beauty's splendor,
Pillowed upon her warm, sweet-scented breast,
Prairie and starlight, ecstasies unkennd or
Dared in dreaming while as yet unguessed,
Can she so shake a form so boyish-slender
With quenchless longings for the unpossessed,
How lavish would be Love, the reckless spender
Of hoardings minted in such sweet unrest?
The love of God is not more strong and tender
Than these wind-kisses on my eyelids pressed.

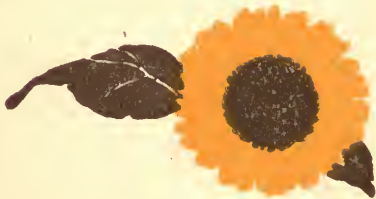
Friend with the night, the wind, the stars, the prairie,
I lie out-flung on her deep-rooted sod;
The crickets chant their anthem, and the very
Loneliness is eloquent of God.
The wind slips by me like a frightened fairy
And nestles in a tuft of goldenrod;
The primroses their dew-filled censers carry
Along the grass-aisles where they drowse and
nod
And swing them ever slower, till a hairy
Indignant bee-priest rattles a milkweed pod.




SUNFLOWERS

I know that in the crowding world behind me
Where'er I turn I touch a friendly hand,
Frank eyes, and strong, clean faces are inclined me
And I behold their smile and understand.
But now, tonight, no phantom fetters bind me,
No unbeliefs the faithless world has planned;
If men would love me, they must come and find me,
Strange travelers from some far distant strand,
For now, tonight, no human cinctures blind me
And Love lays bare His mysteries unscanned.

Willard Wattles





SUNFLOWERS

The Gates Ajar

I have seen a Kansas sunset like a vision in a dream,
When a halo was about me and a glory on the
stream;

When the birds had ceased their music and the
summer day was done,

And prismatic exhalations came a-drifting from the
sun;

And those gold and purple vapors, and the holy
stillness there

Lay upon the peaceful valley like a silent evening
prayer.

And I've gazed upon that atmospheric splendor of
the West

Till it seemed to me a gateway to the regions of the
blest.

I have seen a Kansas sunrise like the waking of a
dream,

When every dewy blade of grass caught up the
golden gleam;

When every bird renewed the song he sang the night
before,

And all the silent, slumbering world returned to life
once more;

When every burst of radiance called up a throng of
life,



And all the living, waking world with melody was
rife.

And as that flood of life and song came floating
down the plain,

It seemed to me those golden gates were opened
wide again.

Albert Bigelow Paine

Tescott

Somewhere out West there lies a sloping plain

That looks across the winding river-track

A mile away to northward, bluish-black

With elm and cottonwood, then up again

Rises to meet the distant sky. Green grain

And greener grass in spring; in fall, wheat
stack

And pink-brown prairie grass, stock at the
rack,

And marvels of sky this landscape doth contain.

Here was my dear one born and passed her days,

Familiar with each bird and flower and tree,

Light-hearted, supple-thewed, a boy in ways,

Knew nature, music, books, but knew not me.

How beautiful her youth! yet I confess

The memory breeds in me strange loneliness.

William Herbert Carruth



The Sensitive Brier*

I

When sweetly breathed the budded rose
 In new-made majesty and grace,
 Did not the Master for a space
 A holy stillness interpose —
 Forbidding any wind to brush
 Her clasping petals? . . . Ere they stirred
 While yet her whispered name, half-heard,
 Sank silenced in that heavenly hush,
 Did He not turn to fashion thee,
 O babe-like flower! and smile to see —
 Deep-musing on the Christ to be?

II

Pales in thy woof the rainbow's red;
 Her gold adorns the raveled veils
 Where-through thy blessed breath exhales;
 Her lucid dew's are on thee shed.
 So sweet! So sweet! — The beds of spice
 Whereon our fair, first mother slept,
 No daintier drops of honey kept
 To feed the bees of Paradise.
 Lo, where thy shrinking leaves retreat
 At coming of the sinner's feet!
 Yet will thy soft forgiving greet.



SUNFLOWERS

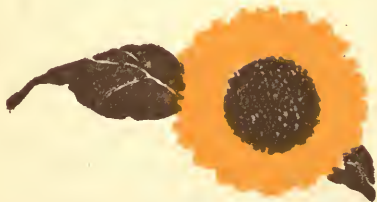
III


Ah, if the Lowly One might pass
And yonder blowing roses all
Their fragrant loveliness let fall
To cushion smooth the thickening grass,
How would I haste thyself to choose
From all the pure! And lifting high
These most abundant blossoms, sigh:

“Thou who canst virtue give nor lose,
With whom the burdened ones find rest—
The while I touch thy seamless vest,
Gaze but on these and I am blest!”

Amanda T. Jones

* A procumbent perennial, American genus *Schrankia*, found on the rolling prairies of Kansas and other south-eastern states. Because of the exceeding loveliness and unsurpassable fragrance of its flowers, it is popularly known as The Sensitive Rose.





SUNFLOWERS

The Prairie Wind

Dim in the dawn of the centuries, born of the Prairie
and Sun,

Brother of tempest and sunshine, swift on the sandals
of air,

Laughing, I race with the shadows that chase
o'er the infinite plain,

Thrilling with passionate pleasure and pain;
As the wind-blossoms shatter and scatter their
delicate petals of white

On the grass as I pass with a near-imperceptible
tread,

With a rustle as slight as the whisper of night
To the tremulous stars overhead;

So, pulsing with light, aglow with the rapture of
flight,

Under the glorious heavens I love

Where the ponderous thunder-heads rumble
above,

I leap in the gladness and strength of a life without
limit of length,

And laugh as I run on my way to the sun.

Ah, prairies of Kansas, craving the vast, far reach
of the sky,

Astir with wind-longings, aquiver, afire with yearn-
ings and deathless desire,




SUNFLOWERS

Passionate-leaning along the horizon bar in
the shimmering heat,
Where the lips of warm lovers meet and press
In a region of dreams, so it seems, with an
infinite tenderness.

Still when the luminous star of the West is alight
on the breast of the night,
Wilt thou greet with as constant caress, with the
ardor of-noon,
Those death-pallid lips, dimly white in the indistinct
light of the moon?

Hearken, ye dreamers that dwell in the cell of a
ripening milkweed pod,
The burly thistle is white as snow, and the
crimson cactus-plant aglow,
While the glorious goldenrod
Shelters the lumbering bumble-bee as the murmurous
breezes drowsily
Drone him slumberously to rest in the musty fra-
grance of her breast —
Come forth on fairy, ephemeral wings to the golden
earth and the azure deep,
Upward the wild wind-currents sweep, vir-
ginal, entire,
Sweet with a prairie purity, to the purging passion
of the sun and perfected desire.

The frail wild hyacinths shudder to feel my sinewy
finger-tips circle their stems,



SUNFLOWERS

The haughtiest brook-grasses waver and reel and
 loosen their dusty pollen gems,
Rich treasure of fragrant prairie kind they cast in
 the pouch of the flying wind;
The gold I filch from the sunflower crown, and bend
 the sturdiest ragweed down;
I tease the delicate sensitive-rose till all of her
 slender tendrils close
And the exquisite pink-veined stamens shrink in pain
 of the boisterous wind that blows.
The purple plume of the buffalo-pea trembles in
 dreamy ecstasy;
And the fragile primrose, creamy white, bathes in
 the lucent floods of light;
While the scarlet mallow spreads her cup to gather
 the golden globules up;
 And the star-grass spangles the sod.

The yellow grain in the waving plain a molten ocean
 rolls;
Cloud billows fleet with dusky feet over the golden
 heads of wheat;
Wind-ruffled corn blades flap and sigh, and lift their
 cool green standards high,
 Electric to the sun and sky.

Many a shy-hid russet bird with wild wind-longings
 dumbly stirred
From his lowly nest on the homely ground, startles
 the silence into sound.



SUNFLOWERS

Wee, quavering cricket voices shrill, and thrushes'
songs that throb until
Sweet-aching wonder strikes them still,
Mingle and float and fade and die in the vast, wide
arches of the sky;
Hushed reverence of solemn prayer hallows the
prairie everywhere;
Cloud altars glow, while to and fro the wild-rose
censers fragrant blow.

The mottled bull-snake glides between low Gothic
aisles of living green,
Light-flickering shadows fret his back with change-
ful sheen of gold and black;
The brooding dove on her eggs of white thrills with
a dumb maternal fright,
And closer crouches, lustrous-eyed, in the merciful
dusk where the shadows hide.

Slight; fragile, long-antennaed things with gossamer
and emerald wings,
Querulous teem in the matted grass as the slender
ant processions pass,
Each thrifty toiler swart and brown beneath his
burden of thistle-down.
In dim secluded galleries the ravenous spider his
shuttle plies,
With swift and sure precision weaves a silver web
in the shining leaves,
Spinning death from a poison heart.

A decorative header featuring a central sun with rays, flanked by two stylized hands or wings reaching out. Below this graphic, the word "SUNFLOWERS" is printed in a serif font, centered between two horizontal lines.

SUNFLOWERS

Afar, ————— apart,
Lone in the violet vault of the sky, with a steady
wing and a watchful eye,
The silent buzzards fly.

The saucy brown gopher's prying snout noses the
tumble-weed about;
The stiff little prairie-dog warily watches the radiant
summer sky,
Till a sudden shadow, swooping fell, arouses the
vigilant sentinel;
At the warning chipper of his alarm the little gray
townsmen scurry from harm,
And the angry hawk, with his swoop in vain, mounts
in the dusk to his post again.

Soft-footedly the Twilight steals with its blessed
benison of rest

Up the long vistas of the West,
The slow sun sinks to the level rim of the prairie
ocean, cold and dim;

The earliest moon crescent, thin and slim, pale
in her bridal garments white,

Follows after — and it is night.

Soft-shrouding shadows darken all the prairie in a
sombre pall;

Star-eddies rise where the star-dust lies in the wind-
ing highway of the skies;

Pale, phosphorescent fire-flies glow; and plaintive
murmurings are heard,



SUNFLOWERS

Sleep-wrested from a drowsy bird.
The white moth fondles the yucca bloom
Wan gleaming through the ghostly light her spectral
wings;
Weird wailing through the midnight gloom, with
haunting minor quaverings
The coyote cries forebodingly as some lone
phantom from a tomb.

The planets swing in a deathless ring, serene and
clear;
Sure-piloted the meteors steer through the
thin, translucent atmosphere,
And every dusky satellite safe voyages the sea
of Night.

In the prairie-grasses the mother dove broods on her
nest with a constant love,
While the sensitive-rose leaves delicate spread a
thicker shadow around her head;
Shrouding Creation from pole to pole, stretches the
infinite Over-Soul,
And the world-wind yearns unsatisfied, from the
Thing Possessed to the Thing Denied —
But the merciful, sheltering Wings abide.

Wind of the Prairie, blowing free,
Wind of the Prairie, blow for me —
With shining feet o'er the golden wheat,
Where the green corn blades in the summer heat

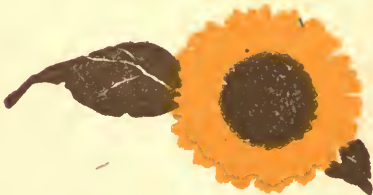


SUNFLOWERS

Whisper and sigh as you rustle by,
Blow with impalpable fragrancy
The little white cloud from the infinite sky,
And my heart all clean and sweet.

Wind of the Spirit, blowing free,
Wind of the Spirit, blow for me —
On wings afire with subtle desire
Lift the lily soul from the crumbling mire,
And higher, higher, and ever higher than the noisy
mart and the slender spire,
Blow through unspeakable azure deeps, through the
silver lane where the comet leaps,
By the molten moon, up the starry steeps,
Those white soul blossoms through the night,
In scarce-heard music out of sight.

Willard Wattles





SUNFLOWERS

The Prairie

A world, wide, wide;
Hours, long, and slow;
High grass, brown, dead;
Hills, dim and low;


A sky, blue, blue;
A hawk, high, lone;
A blazing sun,
To clouds, unknown;

A bird, small, small,
And timid and gay;
A cactus bloom;
A coyote at play;

A wind, wild, wild;
A tree, dim, far,
On a bluff, red, steep;
Twilight — a star;

A moon, gold, gold;
Silence, deep, deep;
Magic, mystery,
Night — and sleep.

Dorothy Statton



SUNFLOWERS

Corn

I

Everywhere, spicy air,
Ditches dry and meadows bare.
And sailing high with honking cry,
The ducks go tracking down the sky.

We hear the pipe of quail and snipe,
And paw-paw and persimmons ripe,
The loaded wains with creaking chains
Go rolling down the country lanes.

The blackbirds talk in raucous squawk,
And hop from spray and mullen-stalk;
The huskers' shout has put to rout
The hungry crows that hung about.

With ragged plumes and garments torn,
There stands the army of the corn,
But victor chariot wheels have passed
Above the reeling ranks at last.

II

The kingly corn on dale and swell,
The Kansas corn I love so well —



If I could tell its wonder tale,
 Could sing the epic of the corn,
The scythe of time could not avail,
Nor Death that beats us with his flail,
Could husk the kernels of my fame
 From fruited hearts as yet unborn —
If I could tell the wonder tale,
 And sing the epic of the corn.

III

Around the dream-encrusted maize
 The tendrils of my heart entwine,
As dew-kissed morning-glories raise
 Their eyes that in the corn rows shine;
 The clinging morning-glory's vine,
That like a gentlewoman sweet
 With soft caress of love divine,
 Doth let her dimpled arms entwine
Her champion — sitting at her feet.

I cannot tell how much they mean,
The morning-glory's tendrils green
 That kiss, caress and closely grasp
Their towering lord of waxy sheen,
An Indian monarch, by his queen
 Held gently in an amorous clasp;
A monarch and his lovely queen
That ne'er a shadow falls between.



SUNFLOWERS

Not closer does the flower twine,
Not closer do its tendrils dart,
Than clings this dreaming heart of mine,
Than twine the tendrils of my heart.
From furrows cut through prairie grass
The startled wild owl rose and flew;
The prairie-dog blinked to see them pass,
And over his roof-tree the sod corn grew.

The startled hiss of the rattlesnake
Was music strange to my baby ears,
As I watched the toiling of "Bill" and "Jake,"
The stupid, lumbering yoke of steers.
And the cracking lash was a lilting song,
With a slow, monotonous, dull refrain
Which told of a nation, young and strong,
Come out to conquer the desert plain.
A great migration that moved along
Into the desert that else had lain
As it first was dreamed in the Maker's
brain,
When the planets chorused their morning song.

IV

The glowing coals of memory, they flicker up and
start
A thousand ghosts a-walking in the chambers of my
heart.



SUNFLOWERS

Again I see the prairie home, the snow storm drifting
high,
And the little children gazing through the dugout's
battered eye.

A sod house in the winter 'neath the blizzard's howl-
ing din,
With famine stalking 'round us and the lean wolf
looking in.

That night within the sod house home a tragedy was
seen,

A little soul came in and went like firelight on a
screen.

The tired children lay and slept within a trundle
bed,

And did not hear the angel's wings that fluttered
overhead.

Upon her bed of prairie grass a mother lay in pain,
A little soul came in the room and winged its flight
again.

And all night by the smoking lamp a father knelt and
wept,

And folded in a cotton quilt the little body slept.

"Take me back to Indiana," was the woman's plain-
tive moan.

The words fell on his anguished heart and crushed it
like a stone;

The lean and wolfish desert, it had gulped them in its
maw,



SUNFLOWERS

The driveling, red gummed famine how it ground
them in its jaw.

The god of Indiana, where the waving Wabash flows,
Rode not the saw-edged shrieking gales amid the
Kansas snows.

The heaven they praised in fairer lands, in fairer
days gone by,

Gleamed not above this dugout in this winter-cur-
dled sky —

With that stricken mother weeping for her girlhood
home afar

Where the red hearth fires were burning underneath
a kinder star.

It is morning on the prairie,
And beneath the frozen snows
The father lays his baby
In its tiny swaddling-clothes,
With no board to form a coffin
For the little one's repose.

V

The years have in their cycle turned
With vast, unceasing tread,
The fires of grief that hissed and burned
Lie in their ashes, dead.
Again it is the harvest morn,
With long green rows of standing corn.



SUNFLOWERS

The long green rows of standing corn,
 Their leaves in quiet set;
The beaded grass of dewy morn,
 The yellow tassels wet,
A cobweb jeweled with a pearl,
The sweet face of a country girl.

The long green rows of kingly corn,
 And love's enchanted dream;
And teded grass and prickly thorn,
 How sweet doth labor seem!
For down the bladed rows I see
The laughing lips that long for me

The silken plumage of the corn
 Is but her waving hair;
The morning-glory's purple horn
 That twinkles in the air
Is like her limpid, laughing eyes
That lure me on to paradise.

VI

When the cotton clouds drift over after rain,
And the floods have eased the arid earth of pain,
 And in the meadow's grassy swale,
 A thousand frogs are croaking,
And this the burden of their tale:
 "The land enjoyed the soaking!"



SUNFLOWERS

Then my spirits soar as high
As those fleeces in the sky
That go sailing, sailing sailing when the rain's
gone by.

When the thirsty corn has drunk its fill of rain,
Then the heart of every man is glad again;
And the blades that had been curling,
When the days of drought were here,
Are crisping and unfurling
With the old-time hope and cheer.
Then I gaze into the sky
At the fleeces riding high,
That go sailing, sailing, sailing when the rain's
gone by.

VII

Corn shuck and corn stalk. Plenty in the land.
Country men and country maids going to the
dance;
Henry Boggs guessing hogs. Country sport is grand!
Me·a-courting Mary with a shy and honied
glance.
Yellow ears are for the steers, and 'the grunting
swine,
Smell of coffee on the air and bacon in the pan,
Loaded cribs with bulging ribs, country life is fine
And Corn's the mighty pillar that supports
Jehovah's plan.



VIII

Daddy's burning cornstalks,
All the sky is red;
All the little tow-heads
Desert the trundle-bed
To gather at the window
And watch the tossing fires,
Reaching toward the starland,
With their gleaming spires.

They are pixy armies
Clashing in the night,
Marching, flaming soldiers
To the fairy fight.
See the torches dancing
In the evening chill —
Daddy's burning cornstalks
Out upon the hill.

IX

They are planting corn in the dark brown loam,
And dreaming the dream of the harvest home;
And the first anemone's azure eye
Has looked in love at the summer sky.

They are planting the corn and the earth lies brown
Underneath the planters, sailing up and down,
With blackbirds fluttering in their lee
Like ships and gulls on an ebon sea.



SUNFLOWERS

X

The days of youth are golden; Oh, doubly so were
mine.

The morning was a conjurer, the night was mellow
wine.

The days of youth are holy, for they thrilled with
hope divine.

I toiled amid the cornfields, on hill and dewy dell;
The voices of the corn leaves, they wove a faerie
spell;

I heard the living whisper of her I loved so well.

A hundred wild emprises within my heart were born;
I was a mighty emperor, my soldiers were the corn;
My herald blew a signal blast—upon the dinner
horn.

But time has wrecked my empire, my people all are
slain;

Ah, vanished boyhood yearnings and dreams that
died in vain,

Like broken cornstalks blowing about the wintry
plain.

XI

Cutting weeds in August days
'Neath the sun's relentless rays,
Through the corn's unending rows,
Where the buffalo briar grows,




SUNFLOWERS

Where the red-winged hopper sings
To his friend with yellow wings,
Chopping down the cockle-burrs,
Where the hopper leaps and whirrs.

Oh, to bathe my burning face
At the mossy watering-place;
Wash my eyes that smart and sting
In the waters of the spring
Bursting from its stony grot
And trickling through the pasture lot,
Through the frog-befuddled pond,
Through the broken dam beyond,
On and on adown the draw,
Through thickets green of plum and haw;
With liquid tones among the stones
As white as ancient battle bones;
Still winding down the grassy glen
Through shadows, in and out again,
Till 'midst the scrub and alders thick,
It tumbles into Shallow creek.

How my youthful, fevered dream
Sails upon that pigmy stream,
Drifts and sails abroad, afar
Past the pasture's wooden bar
Where the waxen sumachs gleam,
Guide posts on the path o' dream,
Past the sunset's yellow sea,
Past the weary things that be,



SUNFLOWERS

To the land of We Shall See,
Where my Princess waits for me!

XII

A blight is on the elderblooms; the leaves are gray
with dust;

The willows droop their silver plumes; the weeds are
red with rust.

Where once the brook went flowing, under elm and
plum,

Are thirsty cattle lowing —

Drought has come!

King Drought is on the clover land; the cringing
corn is curled;

Death is blowing overland; doom is on the world.

The sky a brassy canopy; the brown turf charred;
Famine in full panoply —

The Drought King's Guard!

Where late the grass was blooming, loud the locust
hums;

Their tom-toms are booming; the King's Court
comes.

Heat Wave and Dust Swirl, his courtiers advance;
The Whirlwind his nautch girl

In a winding dance!

The south wind his trumpet, frightening with its cries;
The Whirlwind his strumpet, to lure his wanton eyes.



SUNFLOWERS

His hosts tramp the clover sward, in their mirth
 obscene;
Death is his overlord;
 Famine his queen!

XIII

Under the tufted prairie sod they laid the pioneer;
Under the glowing golden rod and the grasses he
 held dear.

The funeral candle lit for him
In his mortuary chamber dim,
Was the helianthus' flaming rim;
And the night hawk sang his requiem.

The night hawk sang his requiem to soothe him
 underground;

The sunflower lifted its flowing rim above the little
 mound;

And deep in the folds of the grateful grave,
Where the dreaming dead in its blisses lave,
He heard the flutter of banners brave
Where the blades of corn on its tassels wave.

Where the blades of corn and the tassels wave they
 laid the pioneer;

He heard the flutter of banners brave, a sound that
 the dead can hear;

They told the tale of his vanished days,
Of love's first kiss in the rustling maize,



SUNFLOWERS

Of her who followed his winding ways
From life's first green to its autumn grays.

Of her who followed his winding ways, this prophet
of the corn,
And shared his triumph of harvest days and the rue
and prickly thorn;
And she is slumbering close beside
The lover with whom she dared to ride,
From the far Ohio's dimpled tide
Into the dusty desert wide.

Into the dusty desert wide he came, a pioneer,
Leading the cornfield's spreading tide, and now he's
resting here;
The corn he loved in the days of old
Has over his pillow its blades unrolled,
And sent its roots through his dreaming mold,
And twined them deep in his heart of gold.

Under the tufted prairie sod they laid the pioneer;
Under the glowing golden rod and the grasses he
held dear.
And the funeral candle lit for him
In his mortuary chamber dim,
Was the helianthus' flaming rim;
And the night hawk sang his requiem.

C. L. Edson



The Harvest Hand

Hot, later June: the midday sun blazed down
Above a little flat-roofed Western town,
 While, mile on mile, dappled with wind and sun,
The multitudinous-headed, billowy wheat
Rippled and shimmered in the midday heat;
 Reapers were whirring; harvest was begun.

In the town's park a vacant bandstand stood,
And round it lounged a noisy multitude
 Of men drawn thither by the lure of wheat;
Some come for work, and some to win away
At dice and cards the others' harvest pay. . . .
 They filled the grass, and overflowed the street,

And still in dusty flocks they straggled in,
With luggage or without, long, short, fat, thin —
 Hoboes, and schoolboys looking for a lark,
And due for aching arms and blistered hands —
They dropped from puffing trains in dusty bands
 And lit the river's edge with fires at dark,

Ice boxes were depleted of their store,
Chicken roosts robbed, and every kitchen door
 Was knocked by beggars twenty times a day;
Framps, yeggs, and vagrants — every hue and kind —
Swarmed in, until the townsmen, of one mind,
 Wished the wheat harvested, and them away.



SUNFLOWERS

They pitched quoits close to where the farmers
 hitched,
And quarreled, cursed, and jested as they pitched,
 And sprawled and read torn papers in the shade;
Gambled, and swapped tales, each of his own worth,
And told how they had roamed about the earth,
 And interchanged the Hobo's stock-in-trade.

To them a farmer came . . . A young man
 played
At horseshoes now, his open shirt displayed
 A neck turned like Apollo Belvedere's;
He swung upon his left foot light and free
Apoise like cloud-descending Mercury —
 A limber college lad of twenty years.

The horseshoe circled through the air and flew
Right on the peg — another . . . on it . . .
 “Two Ringers,” his partner called. “We've
 got 'em beat.”

The player took his coat and walked away;
The farmer leaned to speak to him. “Good day,
 Young fellow. Want to help me with my
 wheat?”

“I will, if you can take my partner here.”
“My neighbor can.”

 “How much?”

 “Enough — don't fear.”



SUNFLOWERS

Two and a half a day and board."

"All right."

The young men flung their baggage in the back,
The farmer gave his horses' thighs a whack,
And a thick cloud of dust hid them from sight.

Jack rabbits bobbed their long ears through the green
Alfalfa fields, now dropping back unseen,
Now rising at the end of a long leap
Like swimmers coming up through waves at sea;
And, rolling far and wide illimitably,
Ran miles of grain gold-ripe for men to reap.

And headers in wide fields along the road
With rolling reels and moving horses showed
And made a sleepy sound like distant rain;
The latticed-sloping header-boxes went
Beside them, taking in the full tide sent
Upward, of canvas-carried streams of grain.

Four bastioned clouds of toppled gold and snow
Peered over the sky's edge; another, slow,
Swam out, and drew a continent of shade,
That lingered after it, across the grain,
Then left the void without one fleecy stain
To mark the dome of quiet blue it made. . . .

And now the little flat-roofed Western town
Lay mile on mile behind, and night came
down. . . .



SUNFLOWERS

Across the prairie lights gleamed here and there —

And now the horses quickened as they clomb
The last rise in the road, and were at home.

Across the yard a lantern's smoky flare

Lit two long legs that scissored through the gloom.
It was a farmhand came. . . . There was no
room;

So one boy slept that night in the stifling mow;
The other went across to the next farm,
While dogs for miles around took up alarm. . . .
And both of them were harvest workers now.

The first, John Anson, lay awake till morn,
Hearing the horses stir and munch their corn,
Then slid into the flow of a soft dream,
When, to the dim light of their lanterns' flame,
The twilight-risen harvest workers came,
Each one to feed and curry his own team.

"Get over, Pete," and "Where's my currycomb
gone?"

So (the east olive-gray with windy dawn,
The gray moon sick with sunrise) round by
round

Anson groped down the ladder. . . . Someone
beat

Upon a pan. . . . The men pushed in to eat,
And drank their coffee with a sucking sound.



SUNFLOWERS

"What's your name, lad?"

"John Anson."

"From the East?"

"Yes." . . .

For a moment the mouth-smacking ceased,
And round the men a wave of interest ran.

"What! Only one egg? Best take three or
four. . . ."

"I have no appetite. . . . No, thanks — no
more. . . ."

"You'll have to *eat* to stand the harvest, man."

As for others . . . Any one would think
Them Norsemen all, to see them eat and drink:
Bacon and eggs 'and pancakes, piles of
bread . . .

"Just wait until the sun burns over noon;
Tomorrow he will sing a different tune
Or I'm a liar," big Bill Adams said,

Helping himself to his third plate of eggs.
"Yes, or the strength will drop out of his legs
And he'll cave in and go on back to town."
With this they hurried forth and drove afield
To gather in the ripened harvest yield
Where the hot sun already sizzled down,

The hot sun sizzled down, the sky blazed bare,
A barren brooding blue. No cloud was there



SUNFLOWERS

To trail its moving shadow o'er the wheat;
And up and down the buzzing reaper went,
Casting its flooding grain-flow upward-sent.

Into the latticed header-box. The heat

Sent the sweat pouring forth in itchy streams.

To John, the novice, it already seems

That he has worked a full half-day or more
Ere a slow hour has dragged. Straws smite his ears;
Sweat stings his eyes; chaff fills them full of tears —

He labors like a slave chained to an oar,

Spreading the heads out even. At the stack,
Though straining till he aches in all his back,

Another wagon waits their place. "Doggone it,"
His driver shouts; "we're getting in the road. . . .
How in the heck can we heave off a load

When *you* lift at each forkful standing on it?

"Here — let me show you." After which it comes
Easier to John, though his veins beat like drums

About his ears. "Football's an hour or two,
But here you're on the leap the whole day long
Not cheered by schoolmates with a college song,
And sixteen hours a day before you're through."

He shot a glance up from his red-streaked eye:

"Won't the sun ever mount up in the sky?"

The brackish water tasted like rare wine.



"Thank God! At last!"

"Come, boys," the farmer said.

John snatched his straw hat from his sweat-drenched head.

A waving apron moved — the dinner sign, . . .

Bob (Anson's partner) ran through the same mill
On the next farm, till he, too, grew in skill

And learned endurance of the heavy grind;
He, too, fought with their enemy, the wheat,
And sprawled about the load on slipping feet,
And reveled in each little cooling wind.

That afternoon wore slowly to an end. . . .
Homeward by moonrise men and horses wend.

John's muscles tremble from the unused strain
A fellow quit that night, and so, instead
Of the close mow, he had a cot for a bed;
But nightmares seized upon his tired brain.

He thought that he lay prone beneath the sky
And giants heaped wheat on him mountain-high;
He strove in vain to cast the weight aside;
And if his legs were not held ramrod-straight
Tense cramps would come and seize on them, nor
bate

Until he rose and rubbed and almost cried.

At breakfast the men held themselves in wait
Till for the second time he heaped his plate,



SUNFLOWERS

Then forth into unbridled mirth they broke.
"The kid has changed his diet overnight."
"Work always did improve the appetite."
John ate, and groaned, and snarled against their
joke.

So galled and sore that he could hardly walk,
Scant wish had he to jest with them or talk.
He felt like quitting, swore he would by noon.
But soon the stiffness wore away, and he
Grew blithest of the rowdy company
And leaned against his fork, and hummed a tune.

And, then, the farmer's daughter, home again,
Put brightness in the faces of the men
By her sweet singing presence. She had been
To Kansas City visiting a friend. . . .
John hoped the world would sooner come to end
Than the last load of wheat be gathered in;

For she was like a cloudless morning. Soon
They sat alone beneath the mounting moon
Despite the next day's work each woke to do;
And the old game between the two began
That has been played ever since woman and man
Lived in the Garden and were only Two.

A whip-poor-will sang in a cottonwood tree;
Far off another answered plaintively;
A thousand little night things woke and cried,



SUNFLOWERS

And the wide body of the bulging moon,
Orbed to the full globe of its plenilune,
 Upon the silver elm-tops seemed to ride.

Clouds caught, and broke across its amber face
And trailed themselves into dissolving lace. . . .

 His hand found hers as if it thought and knew:
For the most loveless heart in love's despite
Could scarce resist a woman, stars and night —
 John only did what any man would do.


They felt akin. They loved. Their pulses burned
As through each other's eyes they each discerned
 New worlds; for she, above the cook-stove's
 heat,

Dreamed, as she worked, helping her mother cook:
He, where the sun blazed down, with visions shook
 While grappling with the pouring hills of wheat.

Their growing love seized on each idle space,
And Anson with his sun-browned boyish face
 Walked with her Sundays. Sweet the thrill that
 comes

When all the banners of the heart unroll
And all the flowers of life break in the soul
 And Fancy marches with her fifes and
 drums. . . .

The prairie like a purple map spread far,
And here and there a village like a star



SUNFLOWERS

Flashed in the distance; they sat on a hill
Hand mixed with hand; the sky wall, far away,
Seemed to push out and break beyond the day
 Until its blue edge touched God's window sill.

At any moment something might look out
Divine, of that the lovers held no doubt;
 They floated in eternity together.
They leaned against a ledge whose lime-traced shell
Into the depths of some old ocean fell
 And now lay bared beneath the tooth of weather.

Tears rushed up in their eyes; a sacred awe
Came on them out of space. Their spirits saw
 The meaning of the Man and Woman's tryst.
All that religions sanction or condemn
Swept like a prairie whirlwind over them:
 And they were caught to heaven as they kissed.

A mover's wagon, passing at the base
Of Pawnee Rock, again brought time and space
 Into their ken, and, light at heart as birds,
Homeward they strolled along the winding way,
Feeling within their hearts as ones that pray,
 Without a word, beyond the need of words.

Flashing along the fence a striped squirrel ran.
On either side the road, right fair to scan,
 Leaned crowds of sunflowers full of golden
 faces.



SUNFLOWERS

A crimson-budded cactus here and there
Spread earlike where the ground was baked and bare ;
 And wood doves cooed and cooed in shady places.

Homeward the lovers passed, as much at peace
As was the stainless sky where trailed no fleece
 Of golden cloud ; the sun sank red and low,
Flinging out bands of tranquil evening light,
While in the east the purple fringe of night
 Began to widen upward and to grow.

But jolly Bob, his mirth was soured with gloom ;
('Tis fate, I guess — two men in the same room
 May sleep when lightning strikes, one go un-
 shent) ;
Love had struck Bob, too, but : " It cannot be."
Thus she had spoken ; and so, gloomily
 He stuffed his suitcase, damned his luck, and
 went.

" This Kansas, how I hate it." Bob began,
" It was the last in the Creator's plan —
 He took the leavings when all else was made."
" Not so," quoth John. " It was the first begun :
Here Eden stood when the round world was done."
 " It has gone back since then," the other said ;

" I hate it. . . . This won't last long . . .
 Soon a draught



SUNFLOWERS

Will bring its wealth and boastfulness to naught :

'Twas meant for coyotes, rattlesnakes and steers ;
Some day the locusts will rain down again
As they've done in the memory of men."

"There is no danger, Bob; those lean-ribbed
years

"Have gone forever. Rich in wheat and corn
And crowding herds, redeemed from reach of scorn,
Serene like a great Titaness she stands,
My dear loved Kansas, in herself secure,
No more a jesting-stock or barren lure,
She feeds the hungry nations with both hands."


"Oh, very well — adopt the blasted State.

I'm sorry that I've got an hour to wait

Until my train comes. Then I'll bid good-bye
To sand and chiggers, bearded grain that crawls
Like something living up one's overalls,
And hell-hot plains top-heavy with blue sky."

So John swung on his heel and homeward rode
With head and shoulders high, while evening glowed
With sunset pinnacles of gold and fire.
Dreams of the future filled his breast with joy —
For all the Man had wakened in the boy;
And in his heart there was a man's desire.

Harry Kemp




SUNFLOWERS

The Washerwoman's Song

In a very humble cot,
In a rather quiet spot,
 In the suds and in the soap,
 Worked a woman full of hope;
Working, singing, all alone,
In a sort of undertone.
 " With the Savior for a friend,
 He will keep me to the end."

Sometimes happening along,
I had heard the semi-song,
 And I often used to smile,
 More in sympathy than guile;
But I never said a word
In regard to what I heard,
 As she sang about her friend
 Who would keep her to the end.

Not in sorrow nor in glee
Working all day long was she,
 As her children, three or four,
 Played around her on the floor;
But in monotones the song
She was humming all day long:
 " With the Savior for a friend,
 He will keep me to the end."



SUNFLOWERS

It's a song I do not sing,
For I scarce believe a thing
 Of the stories that are told
 Of the miracles of old;
But I know that her belief
Is the anodyne of grief,
 And will always be a friend
 That will keep her to the end.

Just a trifle lonesome she,
Just as poor as poor could be;
 But her spirits always rose
 Like the bubbles in the clothes,
And, though widowed and alone,
Cheered her with the monotone,
 Of a Savior and a friend
 Who would keep her to the end.

I have seen her rub and scrub,
On the washboard in the tub,
 While the baby, sopped in suds,
 Rolled and tumbled in the duds;
Or was paddling in the pools,
With old scissors stuck in spools;
 She still humming of her friend
 Who would keep her to the end.

Human hopes and human creeds
Have their root in human needs;




And I should not wish to strip
From that washerwoman's lip
Any song that she can sing,
Any hope that songs can bring;
For the woman has a friend
Who will keep her to the end.

Eugene F. Ware

The Eyes of Lincoln

Sad eyes, that were patient and tender, sad eyes,
that were steadfast and true, and warm with the un-
changing splendor of courage no ills could subdue!
Eyes dark with the dread of the morrow, and woe
for the day that was gone, the sleepless companions
of sorrow, the watchers that witnessed the dawn.
Eyes tired with the clamor and goading, and dim
from the stress of the years, and hollowed by pain
and foreboding, and strained by repression of tears.
Sad eyes that were wearied and blighted, by visions
of sieges and wars, now watch o'er a country united
from the luminous slopes of the stars!

Walt Mason

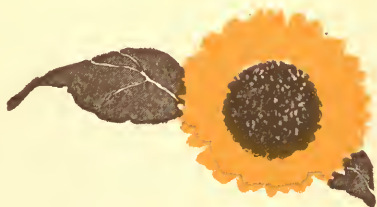


SUNFLOWERS

The Little Green Tents

The little green tents where the soldiers sleep, and the sunbeams play and the women weep, are covered with flowers today; and between the tents walk the weary few, who were young and stalwart in 'sixty-two, when they went to the war away. The little green tents are built of sod, and they are not long, and they are not broad, but the soldiers have lots of room; and the sod is part of the land they saved, when the flag of the enemy darkly waved, the symbol of dole and doom. The little green tent is a thing divine; the little green tent is a country's shrine, where patriots kneel and pray; and the brave men left, so old, so few, were young and stalwart in 'sixty-two, when they went to the war away!

Walt Mason





SUNFLOWERS

The Stars Above Mt. Oread

We walked across the hill one night,
One summer night — Oh, years ago!
And watched each timid valley light
Peer through the darkness down below.
When suddenly he raised his head
In that quick, boyish way he had:
“There are no stars like these,” he said,
“That shine above Mount Oread!”

I watched the struggling valley lights
Push bravely out against the dark
The while his fancy's quickened flights
Bridged all the years and made his mark.
Youth and ambition know no bars,
And these — and faith — were all he had;
So his hopes rose and touched the stars
That night upon Mount Oread.

In after years sometimes he sent
A word of hail across the way.
But how those drifting years were spent,
Or what they brought, he did not say,
Nor could I guess. Yet once, alone,
He wrote, half jestingly, half sad:
“There are no stars like those that shone
That night above Mount Oread!”

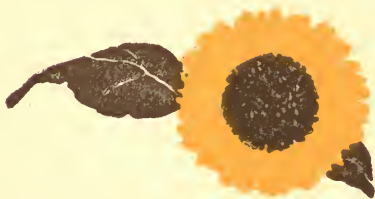
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SUNFLOWERS

Tonight I watched them down below,
The valley lights, now bright, now dim,
And wondered what, of weal or woe,
The fickle years had brought to him
Who once, when all his world was young,
Had dreamed his dream of fame, dear lad!
And dared to set his hopes among
The stars above Mount Oread.

Esther M. Clark



The Real Victor

“He won the prize,” they said, and told me how
Fortune had smiled, and placed the chaplet on his
brow.

I watched him as he passed along the street,
Marked and envied by all he chanced to meet;
On his strong face was written, clear and plain,
Scorn of all things, arrogance, disdain.
Eagerly I sought the faiths it used to wear,
For that fine early frankness, full and fair.
Surprised and sad, I turned away my head,
“The world says he won — but no, he lost,” I said.
Once he was master of himself, strong, brave —
Today his face seals him his own slave.
Since he has won that which he most desired,
The altars die that once the pure flame fired.
True, he has won the prize — a gaudy jewel —
Has won the prize, and found himself a fool.

“He strove to win the prize, but failed,” they said,
And pointed, jeering, at his bowed, bared head.
I paused to watch him as he stood that morn
Disregarding alike men’s pity, and men’s scorn;
He raised his head, I scanned his face with care,
Seeking if envy, hate, or lust, were there.
No, it was stamped with strength and manly pride,
Love, hope, the power to suffer and to hide.
Rejoicing, I stepped quickly to his side,



SUNFLOWERS

“The world says he lost, but no, he won,” I cried.
Though once afraid to trust himself, to choose his
way —

He is the refuge of the weak, fear of the false, today.
As he has failed to win his great desire
Still in his eyes he bears the unfading fire.
True, he has lost the prize — I grasped his hand —
Has lost the prize, but won a prize unplanned.

Dorothy Statton





SUNFLOWERS

Ad Vivos

I, once a man, now safe in dust and slumber,
Did watch, as thou, the days die one by one,
And thought — nor ceased to think — how few their
number,
Till they were gone —
Till they were done.

As thou dost look, I looked with awe and yearning
To skies of stars, to skies filled full of suns,
For trace of gods; and midst all light there burning
I found but one —
Found only One.

Then turned I earthward, heart aflame with longing,
To men and wives, to folk of joy and dole,
And found in mine own kind, stars' light outshining,
— Godlike with love
And part of One —
The human soul —
The moral soul —
The selfless soul.

Kate Stephens



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