

They were both bent on scuffling up
Alluvium so pure that when a blade
To their surprise rang once on stone all day
Each tried to be the first at getting in
A superstitious cry for farmer's luck -
A rivalry that made them both feel kinder.

And so to let Pike seem to have the palm
With grace and not too formal a surrender
Dick said, "You've been a lesson in work wisdom
To work with, Bill. But you won't have my thanks.
I like to think the sun's like you in that -
Since you bring up the subject of the sun.
This would be my interpretation of him.
He bestows summer on us and escapes
Before realizing what we have
To thank him for. He doesn't want our thanks.
He likes to turn his back on gratitude
And avoid being worshiped as a god.
Our worship was a thing he had too much of
In the old days in Persia and Peru.
Shall I go on or have I said enough -
To convey my respect for your position?"

"I guess so," Pike said, innocent of Milton.
"That's where I reckon Santa Claus comes in -
To be our parents' pseudonymity
In Christmas giving, so that they can escape
The thanks and let him catch it as a scapegoat.
And even he, you'll notice dodges off
Up chimney to avoid the worst of it.
We all know his address, Mount Mecla, Iceland.
So anyone can write to him who wants to;
Though they do say he doesn't open letters.
A Santa Claus was needed. And there is one."

"So I have heard and do in part believe it."
Dick said, to old Pike innocent of Shakespeare.
(1948) 1949 "An Afterword" from "Complete Poems".