

"The skin is mine, all mine," she cried; "I did the deed alone."  
 "It's share and share with a guile-yoked pair",  
 he hissed in a pregnant tone;  
 And so they snarled like malamutes over a mildewed bone.

And so they fought, by fear untaught, till haply it befell  
 One dawn of day she slipped away to Dawson town to sell  
 The fruit of sin, this black fox skin that had made their lives a hell.

She slipped away as still he lay, she clutched the wondrous fur;  
 Her pulses beat, her foot was fleet, her fear was as a spur;  
 She laughed with glee, she did not see him rise and follow her.

The bluffs uprear and grimly peer far over Dawson town;  
 They see its lights a blaze o' nights and harshly they look down;  
 They mock the plan and plot of man with grim, ironic frown.

The trail was steep; 'twas at the time when swiftly sinks the snow;  
 All honey-combed, the river ice was rotting down below;  
 The river chafed beneath its rind with many a mighty throe.

And up the swift and oozy drift a woman climbed in fear,  
 Clutching to her a black fox fur as if she held it dear;  
 And hard she pressed it to her breast—then Windy Ike drew near.

She made no moan—her heart was stone—she read his smiling face,  
 And like a dream flashed all her life's dark horror and disgrace;  
 A moment only—with a snarl he hurled her into space.

She rolled for nigh an hundred feet; she bounded like a ball;  
 From crag to crag she caromed down through snow and timber fall; . . .  
 A hole gaped in the river ice; the spray flashed—that was all.

A bird sang for the joy of spring, so piercing sweet and frail;  
 And blinding bright the land was dight in gay and glittering mail;  
 And with a wondrous black fox skin a man slid down the trail.

#### IV.

A wedge-faced man there was who ran along the river bank,  
 Who stumbled through each drift and slough, and ever slipped and sank,  
 And ever cursed his Maker's name, and ever "hooch" he drank.

He travelled like a hunted thing, hard harried, sore distressed;  
 The old grandmother moon crept out from her cloud-quilted nest;  
 The aged mountains mocked at him in their primeval rest.

Grim shadows diapered the snow; the air was strangely mild;  
 The valley's girth was dumb with mirth, the laughter of the wild;  
 The still, sardonic laughter of an ogre o'er a child.

The river writhed beneath the ice; it groaned like one in pain,  
 And yawning chasms opened wide, and closed and yawned again;  
 And sheets of silver heaved on high until they split in twain.

From out the road-house by the trail they saw a man afar  
 Make for the narrow river-reach where the swift cross-currents are;  
 Where, frail and worn, the ice is torn and the angry waters jar.

But they did not see him crash and sink into the icy flow;  
 They did not see him clinging there, gripped by the undertow,  
 Clawing with bleeding finger-nails at the jagged ice and snow.

They found a note beside the hole where he had stumbled in:  
 "Here met his fate by evil luck a man who lived in sin,  
 And to the one who loves me least I leave this black fox skin."

And strange it is; for, though they searched the river all around,  
 No trace or sign of black fox skin was ever after found;  
 Though one man said he saw the tread of HOOFs deep in the ground.

## The Ballad of Pious Pete

*"The North has got him." – Yukonism.*

I tried to refine that neighbor of mine, honest to God, I did.  
 I grieved for his fate, and early and late I watched over him like a kid.  
 I gave him excuse, I bore his abuse in every way that I could;  
 I swore to prevail; I camped on his trail;  
 I plotted and planned for his good.  
 By day and by night I strove in men's sight to gather him into the fold,  
 With precept and prayer, with hope and despair,  
 in hunger and hardship and cold.  
 I followed him into Gehennas of sin, I sat where the sirens sit;  
 In the shade of the Pole, for the sake of his soul,  
 I strove with the powers of the Pit.  
 I shadowed him down to the scrofulous town;  
 I dragged him from dissolute brawls;  
 But I killed the galoot when he started to shoot electricity into my walls.

God knows what I did he should seek to be rid  
 of one who would save him from shame.  
 God knows what I bore that night when he swore  
 and bade me make tracks from his claim.  
 I started to tell of the horrors of hell,  
 when sudden his eyes lit like coals;  
 And "Chuck it," says he, "don't persecute me  
 with your cant and your saving of souls."  
 I'll swear I was mild as I'd be with a child,  
 but he called me the son of a slut;  
 And, grabbing his gun with a leap and a run,  
 he threatened my face with the butt.  
 So what could I do (I leave it to you)? With curses he harried me forth;  
 Then he was alone, and I was alone, and over us menaced the North.

Our cabins were near; I could see, I could hear;  
 but between us there rippled the creek;  
 And all summer through, with a rancor that grew,  
 he would pass me and never would speak.  
 Then a shuddery breath like the coming of Death  
 crept down from the peaks far away;  
 The water was still; the twilight was chill; the sky was a tatter of gray.  
 Swift came the Big Cold, and opal and gold the lights of the witches arose;  
 The frost-tyrant clinched, and the valley was cinched

The foul fiend fox might scathless go, for I would hunt no more;  
 Then I rubbed mine eyes in a vast surprise—it stood by my cabin door.

"A rifle raised in the wraith-like gloom, and a vengeful shot that sped;  
 A howl that would thrill a cream-faced corpse—  
 and the demon fox lay dead . . . .

Yet there was never a sign of wound, and never a drop he bled.

"So that was the end of the great black fox,  
 and here is the prize I've won;  
 And now for a drink to cheer me up—I've munched since the early sun;  
 We'll drink a toast to the sorry ghost of the fox whose race is run."

## II.

Now Claw-fingered Kity and Windy Ike, bad as the worst were they;  
 In their road-house down by the river-trail  
 they waited and watched for prey;  
 With wine and song they joyed night long, and they slept like swine by day.

For things were done in the Midnight Sun that no tongue will ever tell;  
 And men there be who walk earth-free, but whose names are writ in hell—  
 Are writ in flames with the guilty names of Fournier and Labelle.

Put not your trust in a poke of dust would ye sleep the sleep of sin;  
 For there be those who would rob your clothes ere yet the dawn comes in;  
 And a prize likewise in a woman's eyes is a peerless black fox skin.

Put your faith in the mountain cat if you lie within his lair;  
 Trust the fangs of the mother-wolf, and the claws of the lead-ripped bear;  
 But oh, of the wiles and the gold-tooth smiles  
 of a dance-hall wench beware!

Wherefore it was beyond all laws that lusts of man restrain,  
 A man drank deep and sank to sleep never to wake again;  
 And the Yukon swallowed through a hole the cold corpse of the slain.

## III.

The black fox skin a shadow cast from the roof high to the floor;  
 And sleek it seemed and soft it gleamed, and the woman stroked it o'er;  
 And the man stood by with a brooding eye, and gnashed his teeth and swore.

When thieves and thugs fall out and fight there's fell arrears to pay;  
 And soon or late sin meets its fate, and so it fell one day  
 That Claw-fingered Kity and Windy Ike fanged up like dogs at bay.

## The Ballad of the Black Fox Skin

There was Claw-fingered Kirty and Windy Ike living the life of shame,  
When unto them in the Long, Long Night came the man-who-had-no-name;  
Bearing his prize of a black fox pelt, out of the Wild he came.

His cheeks were blanched as the flume-head foam  
when the brown spring freshets flow;  
Deep in their dark, sin-calcined pits were his sombre eyes aglow;  
They knew him far for the fitful man who spat forth blood on the snow.

"Did ever you see such a skin?" quoth he;  
"there's nought in the world so fine—  
Such fullness of fur as black as the night,  
such lustre, such size, such shine;  
It's life to a one-lunged man like me; it's London, it's women, it's wine.

"The Moose-hides called it the devil-fox, and swore that no man could kill;  
That he who hunted it, soon or late, must surely suffer some ill;  
But I laughed at them and their old squaw-rites.  
Ha! Ha! I'm laughing still.

"For look ye, the skin—it's as smooth as sin,  
and black as the core of the Pit.  
By gun or by trap, whatever the hap, I swore I would capture it;  
By star and by star afield and afar, I hunted and would not quit.

"For the devil-fox, it was swift and sly, and it seemed to flee at me;  
I would wake in fright by the camp-fire light, hearing its evil glee;  
Into my dream its eyes would gleam, and its shadow would I see.

"It sniffed and ran from the parrimigan I had poisoned to excess;  
Unharm'd it sped from my wrathful lead ('twas as if I shot by guess);  
Yet it came by night in the stark moonlight to mock at my weariness.

"I tracked it up where the mountains hunch like the vertebrae of the world;  
I tracked it down to the death-still pits where the avalanche is hurled;  
From the glooms to the sacerdotal snows,  
where the carded clouds are curled.

"From the vastitudes where the world protrudes  
through clouds like seas up-shoaled,  
I held its track till it led me back to the land I had left of old—  
The land I had looted many moons. I was weary and sick and cold.

"I was sick, soul-sick, of the futile chase, and there and then I swore

by the stark and cadaverous snows.  
The trees were like lace where the star-beams could chase,  
each leaf was a jewel agleam.  
The soft white hush lapped the Northland and wrapped  
us round in a crystalline dream;  
So still I could hear quite loud in my ear  
the swish of the pinions of time;  
So bright I could see, as plain as could be,  
the wings of God's angels ashine.

As I read in the Book I would oftentimes look  
to that cabin just over the creek.  
Ah me, it was sad and evil and bad, two neighbors who never would speak!  
I knew that full well like a devil in hell  
he was hatching out, early and late,  
A system to bear through the frost-spangled air  
the warm, crimson waves of his hate.  
I only could peer and shudder and fear—'twas ever so ghastly and still;  
But I knew over there in his lonely despair  
he was plotting me terrible ill.  
I knew that he nursed a malice accurst,  
like the blast of a winnowing flame;  
I pleaded aloud for a shield, for a shroud—Oh, God! then calamity came.

Mad! If I'm mad then you too are mad; but it's all in the point of view.  
If you'd looked at them things gallivantin' on wings,  
all purple and green and blue;  
If you'd noticed them twist, as they mounted and hissed  
like scorpions dim in the dark;  
If you'd seen them rebound with a horrible sound,  
and spitefully spitting a spark;  
If you'd watched IT with dread, as it hissed by your bed,  
that thing with the feelers that crawls—  
You'd have settled the brute that attempted to shoot  
electricity into your walls.

Oh, some they were blue, and they slithered right through;  
they were silent and squashy and round;  
And some they were green; they were wriggly and lean;  
they writhed with so hateful a sound.  
My blood seemed to freeze; I fell on my knees,  
my face was a white splash of dread.  
Oh, the Green and the Blue, they were gruesome to view;

but the worst of them all were the Red.  
 They came through the door, they came through the floor,  
 they came through the moss-creviced logs.  
 They were savage and dire; they were whiskered with fire;  
 they bickered like malamute dogs.  
 They ravined in rings like iniquitous things;  
 they gulped down the Green and the Blue.  
 I crinkled with fear whene'er they drew near,  
 and nearer and nearer they drew.

And then came the crown of Horror's grim crown,  
 the monster so loathsomely red.  
 Each eye was a pin that shot out and in, as, squidl-like, it oozed to my bed;  
 So softly it crept with feelers that swept  
 and quivered like fine copper wire;  
 Its belly was white with a sulphurous light,  
 its jaws were a-drooling with fire.  
 It came and it came; I could breathe of its flame,  
 but never a wink could I look.  
 I thrust in its maw the Fount of the Law; I fended it off with the Book.  
 I was weak—oh, so weak—but I thrilled at its shriek,  
 as wildly it fled in the night;  
 And deathlike I lay till the dawn of the day.  
 (Was ever so welcome the light?)

I loaded my gun at the rise of the sun; to his cabin so softly I slunk.  
 My neighbor was there in the frost-freighted air,  
 all wrapped in a robe in his bunk.  
 It muffled his moans; it outlined his bones, as feebly he twisted about;  
 His guns were so black, and his lips seemed to crack,  
 and his teeth all were loosening out.  
 "I was a death's head that peered through the tangle of beard;  
 'twas a face I will never forget;  
 Sunk eyes full of woe, and they troubled me so  
 with their pleadings and anguish, and yet  
 As I rested my gaze in a misty amaze on the scurry-degenerate wreck,  
 I thought of the Things with the dragon-fly wings,  
 then laid I my gun on his neck.  
 He gave out a cry that was faint as a sigh, like a perishing malamute,  
 And he says unto me, "I'm converted," says he;  
 "for Christ's sake, Peter, don't shoot!"

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And it's mine, all mine—and say! if you have a hundred plunks to spare,  
 I'll let you have the chance of your life, I'll sell you a quarter share.  
 You turn it down? Well, I'll make it ten, seeing as you are my friend.  
 Nothing doing? Say! don't be hard—have you got a dollar to lend?  
 Just a dollar to help me out, I know you'll treat me white;  
 I'll do as much for you some day . . . God bless you, sir; good-night.

Day after day was dark as death, but ever and ever at nights,  
With a brilliancy that grew and grew, blazed up the Northern Lights.

They rolled around with a soundless sound like softly bruised silk;  
They poured into the bowl of the sky with the gentle flow of milk.

In eager, pulsing violet their wheeling chariots came,  
Or they poised above the Polar rim like a coronal of flame.

From depths of darkness fathomless their lancing rays were hurled,  
Like the all-combining search-lights of the navies of the world.

There on the roof-pole of the world as one bewitched I gazed,  
And howled and grovelled like a beast as the awful splendors blazed.

My eyes were seared, yet thrall'd I peered  
through the parka hood nigh blind;

But I staggered on to the lights that shone, and never I looked behind.

There is a mountain round and low that lies by the Polar rim,  
And I climbed its height in a whirl of light,

and I peered o'er its jagged brim;

And there in a crater deep and vast, unguessed of men,  
The mystery of the Arctic world was flashed into my ken.

For there these poor dim eyes of mine beheld the sight of sights—  
That hollow ring was the source and spring of the mystic Northern Lights.

Then I staked that place from crown to base, and I hit the homeward trail.

Ah, God! it was good, though my eyes were blurred,  
and I crawled like a sickly snail.

In that vast white world where the silent sky  
communes with the silent snow,

In hunger and cold and misery I wandered to and fro.

But the Lord took pity on my pain, and He led me to the sea,  
And some ice-bound whalers heard my moan, and they fed and sheltered me.

They fed the feeble scarecrow thing that stumbled out of the wild  
With the ravaged face of a mask of death

and the wandering wits of a child—

A craven, cowering bag of bones that once had been a man.

They tended me and they brought me back to the world, and here I am.

Some say that the Northern Lights are the glare of the Arctic ice and snow;  
And some that it's electricity, and nobody seems to know.

But I'll tell you now—and if I lie, may my lips be stricken dumb—

It's a MINE, a mine of the precious stuff that men call radium.

It's a million dollars a pound, they say,  
and there's tons and tons in sight.

You can see it gleam in a golden stream in the solitudes of night.

They're taking me out with an escort about, and under a sergeant's care;  
I am humbled indeed, for I'm cuffed to a Swede  
that thinks he's a millionaire.

But it's all Gospel true what I'm telling to you—  
up there where the Shadow falls—

That I settled Sam Noor when he started to shoot electricity into my walls.

## The Ballad of Blasphemous Bill

I took a contract to bury the body of blasphemous Bill MacKie,  
Whenever, wherever or whatsoever the manner of death he die—  
Whether he die in the light o' day or under the peak-faced moon;  
In cabin or dance-hall, camp or dive, muckluks or patent shoon;  
On velvet tundra or virgin peak, by glacier, drift or draw;  
In muskeg hollow or canyon gloom, by avalanche, fang or claw;  
By bartle, murder or sudden wealth, by pestilence, hooch or lead—  
I swore on the Book I would follow and look till I found my tombless dead.

For Bill was a dainty kind of cuss, and his mind was mighty sot  
On a dinky patch with flowers and grass in a civilized bone-yard lot.  
And where he died or how he died, it didn't matter a damn  
So long as he had a grave with frills and a tombstone "epigram".  
So I promised him, and he paid the price in good cheechako coin  
(Which the same I blowed in that very night down in the Tenderloin).  
Then I painted a three-foot slab of pine: "Here lies poor Bill MacKie",  
And I hung it up on my cabin wall and I waited for Bill to die.

Years passed away, and at last one day came a squaw with a story strange,  
Of a long-deserted line of traps 'way back of the Bighorn range;  
Of a little hut by the great divide, and a white man stiff and still,  
Lying there by his lonesome self, and I figured it must be Bill.  
So I thought of the contract I'd made with him,  
and I took down from the shelf

The swell black box with the silver plate he'd picked out for hisself;  
And I packed it full of grub and "hooch", and I slung it on the sleigh;  
Then I harnessed up my team of dogs and was off at dawn of day.

You know what it's like in the Yukon wild when it's sixty-nine below;  
When the ice-worms wriggle their purple heads  
through the crust of the pale blue snow;  
When the pine-trees crack like little guns in the silence of the wood,  
And the icicles hang down like tusks under the parka hood;  
When the stove-pipe smoke breaks sudden off, and the sky is weirdly lit,  
And the careless feel of a bit of steel burns like a red-hot spit;  
When the mercury is a frozen ball, and the frost-fiend stalks to kill—  
Well, it was just like that that day when I set out to look for Bill.

Oh, the awful hush that seemed to crush me down on every hand,  
As I blundered blind with a trail to find  
through that blank and bitter land;  
Half dazed, half crazed in the winter wild,

And earth and sky were blotted out in a whirl of driving snow.

We were climbing up a glacier in the neck of a mountain pass,  
When the Dago Kid slipped down and fell into a deep crevasse.  
When we got him out one leg hung limp, and his brow was wreathed with pain,  
And he says: "'Tis badly broken, boys, and I'll never walk again.  
It's death for all if ye linger here, and that's no cursed lie;  
Go on, go on while the trail is good, and leave me down to die."  
He raved and swore, but we tended him with our uncouth, clumsy care.  
The camp-fire gleamed and he gazed and dreamed  
with a fixed and curious stare.

Then all at once he grabbed my gun and he put it to his head,  
And he says: "I'll fix it for you, boys" — them are the words he said.

So we sewed him up in a canvas sack and we slung him to a tree;  
And the stars like needles stabbed our eyes, and woeful men were we.  
And on we went on our woeful way, wrapped in a daze of dream,  
And the Northern Lights in the crystal nights  
came forth with a mystic gleam.

They danced and they danced the devil-dance over the naked snow;  
And soft they rolled like a tide upshoaled with a ceaseless ebb and flow.  
They rippled green with a wondrous sheen, they fluttered out like a fan;  
They spread with a blaze of rose-pink rays never yet seen of man.  
They writhed like a brood of angry snakes, hissing and sulphur pale;  
Then swift they changed to a dragon vast, lashing a cloven tail.  
It seemed to us, as we gazed aloft with an everlasting stare,  
The sky was a pit of bale and dread, and a monster revelled there.

We climbed the rise of a hog-back range that was desolate and drear,  
When the Sailor Swede had a crazy fit, and he got to talking queer.  
He talked of his home in Oregon and the peach trees all in bloom,  
And the fern head-high, and the topaz sky, and the forest's scented gloom.  
He talked of the sins of his misspent life, and then he seemed to brood,  
And I watched him there like a fox a hare, for I knew it was not good.  
And sure enough in the dim dawn-light I missed him from the tent,  
And a fresh trail broke through the crusted snow,  
and I knew not where it went.

But I followed it o'er the seamless waste, and I found him at shut of day,  
Naked there as a new-born babe—so I left him where he lay.

Day after day was sinister, and I fought fierce-eyed despair,  
And I clung to life, and I struggled on, I knew not why nor where.  
I packed my grub in short relays, and I covered down in my tent,  
And the world around was purged of sound like a frozen continent.

Spring and summer and autumn went; the sky had a tallow gleam,  
Yer North and ever North we pressed to the land of our Golden Dream.

So we came at last to a tundra vast and dark and grim and lone;  
And there was the little lone moose trail, and we knew it for our own.  
By muskeg hollow and nigger-head it wandered endlessly;  
Sorry of heart and sore of foot, weary men were we.

The short-lived sun had a leaden glare and the darkness came too soon,  
And stationed there with a solemn stare was the pinched, anaemic moon.  
Silence and silver solitude till it made you dumbly shrink,  
And you thought to hear with an outward ear  
the things you thought to think.

Oh, it was wild and weird and wan, and ever in camp o' nights  
We would watch and watch the silver dance of the mystic Northern Lights.  
And soft they danced from the Polar sky and swept in primrose haze;  
And swift they pranced with their silver feet,  
and pierced with a blinding blaze.

They danced a cotillion in the sky; they were rose and silver shod;  
It was not good for the eyes of man—'twas a sight for the eyes of God.  
It made us mad and strange and sad, and the gold whereof we dreamed  
Was all forgot, and our only thought was of the lights that gleamed.

Oh, the tundra sponge it was golden brown, and some was a bright blood-red;  
And the reindeer moss gleamed here and there  
like the tombstones of the dead.  
And in and out and around about the little trail ran clear,  
And we hated it with a deadly hate and we feared with a deadly fear.  
And the skies of night were alive with light,  
with a throbbing, thrilling flame;

Amber and rose and violet, opal and gold it came.  
It swept the sky like a giant scythe, it quivered back to a wedge;  
Argently bright, it cleft the night with a wavy golden edge.  
Pennants of silver waved and streamed, lazy banners unfurled;  
Sudden splendors of sabres gleamed, lightning javelins were hurled.  
There in our awe we crouched and saw with our wild, uplifted eyes  
Charge and retire the hosts of fire in the battlefield of the skies.

But all things come to an end at last, and the muskeg melted away,  
And frowning down to bar our path a muddle of mountains lay.  
And a gorge sheered up in granite walls, and the moose trail crept betwixt;  
'Twas as if the earth had gaped too far and her strong jaws were fixt.  
Then the winter fell with a sudden swoop, and the heavy clouds sagged low,

with its grim heart-breaking woes,  
And the ruthless strife for a grip on life that only the sourdough knows!  
North by the compass, North I pressed; river and peak and plain  
Passed like a dream I slept to lose and I waked to dream again.

River and plain and mighty peak—and who could stand unawed?  
As their summits blazed, he could stand undazed  
at the foot of the throne of God.

North, aye, North, through a land accurst, shunned by the scouring brutes,  
And all I heard was my own harsh word and the whine of the malamutes,  
Till at last I came to a cabin squat, built in the side of a hill.  
And I burst in the door, and there on the floor, frozen to death, lay Bill.

Ice, white ice, like a winding-sheet, sheathing each smoke-grimed wall;  
Ice on the stove-pipe, ice on the bed, ice gleaming over all;  
Sparkling ice on the dead man's chest, glittering ice in his hair,  
Ice on his fingers, ice in his heart, ice in his glassy stare;  
Hard as a log and trussed like a frog, with his arms and legs outspread.  
I gazed at the coffin I'd brought for him,

and I gazed at the gruesome dead,  
And at last I spoke: "Bill liked his joke; but still, goldarn his eyes,  
A man had ought to consider his mates in the way he goes and dies."

Have you ever stood in an Arctic hut in the shadow of the Pole,  
With a little coffin six by three and a grief you can't control?  
Have you ever sat by a frozen corpse that looks at you with a grin,  
And that seems to say: "You may try all day, but you'll never jam me in"?  
I'm not a man of the quitting kind, but I never felt so blue  
As I sat there gazing at that stiff and studying what I'd do.  
Then I rose and I kicked off the husky dogs that were nosing rund about,  
And I lit a roaring fire in the stove, and I started to thaw Bill out.

Well, I thawed and thawed for thirteen days, but it didn't seem no good;  
His arms and legs struck out like pegs, as if they was made of wood.  
Till at last I said: "It ain't no use—he's froze too hard to thaw;  
He's obstinate, and he won't lie straight, so I guess I got to—SAW."  
So I sawed off poor Bill's arms and legs, and I laid him snug and straight  
In the little coffin he picked hisself, with the dinky silver plate;  
And I came nigh near to shedding a tear as I nailed him safely down;  
Then I stowed him away in my Yukon sleigh, and I started back to town.

So I buried him as the contract was in a narrow grave and deep,  
And there he's waiting the Great Clean-up,  
when the Judgment sluice-heads sweep;

And I smoke my pipe and I meditate in the light of the Midnight Sun,  
 And sometimes I wonder if they WAS, the awful things I done.  
 And as I sit and the parson talks, expounding of the Law,  
 I often think of poor old Bill—AND HOW HARD HE WAS TO SAW.

it was gold from the grass-roots down;  
 But we weren't used to such sudden wealth, and there was the siren town.  
 We were crude and careless frontiersmen, with much in us of the beast;  
 We could bear the famine worthily, but we lost our heads at the feast.

The town looked mighty bright to us, with a bunch of dust to spend,  
 And nothing was half too good them days, and everyone was our friend.  
 Winning meant more than mining then, and life was a dizzy whirl,  
 Gambling and dropping chunks of gold down the neck of a dance-hall girl;  
 Till we went clean mad, it seems to me, and we squandered our last poke,  
 And we sold our claim, and we found ourselves one bitter morning—broke.

The Dago Kid he dreamed a dream of his mother's aunt who died—  
 In the dawn-light dim she came to him, and she stood by his bedside,  
 And she said: "Go forth to the highest North till a lonely trail ye find;  
 Follow it far and trust your star, and fortune will be kind."

But I jeered at him, and then there came the Sailor Swede to me,  
 And he said: "I dreamed of my sister's son,

who croaked at the age of three.

From the herded dead he sneaked and said: 'Seek you an Arctic trail;  
 "Tis pale and grim by the Polar rim, but seek and ye shall not fail."

And lo! that night I too did dream of my mother's sister's son,

And he said to me: "By the Arctic Sea there's a treasure to be won.

Follow and follow a lone moose trail, till you come to a valley grim,  
 On the slope of the lonely watershed that borders the Polar brim."

Then I woke my pals, and soft we swore by the mystic Silver Flail,

"Twas the hand of Fate, and to-morrow straight

we would seek the lone moose trail.

We watched the groaning ice wrench free, crash on with a hollow din;  
 Men of the wilderness were we, freed from the taint of sin.

The mighty river snatched us up and it bore us swift along;

The days were bright, and the morning light was sweet with jewelled song.

We poled and lined up nameless streams, portaged o'er hill and plain;

We burnt our boat to save the nails, and built our boat again;

We guessed and groped, North, ever North, with many a twist and turn;

We saw ablaze in the deathless days the splendid sunsets burn.

O'er soundless lakes where the grayling makes a rush at the clumsy fly;

By bluffs so steep that the hard-hit sheep falls sheer from out the sky;

By illied pools where the bull moose cools and wallows in huge content;

By rocky lairs where the pig-eyed bears peered at our tiny tent.

Through the black canyon's angry foam we hurried to dreamy bars,

And round in a ring the dog-nosed peaks bayed to the mocking stars.