

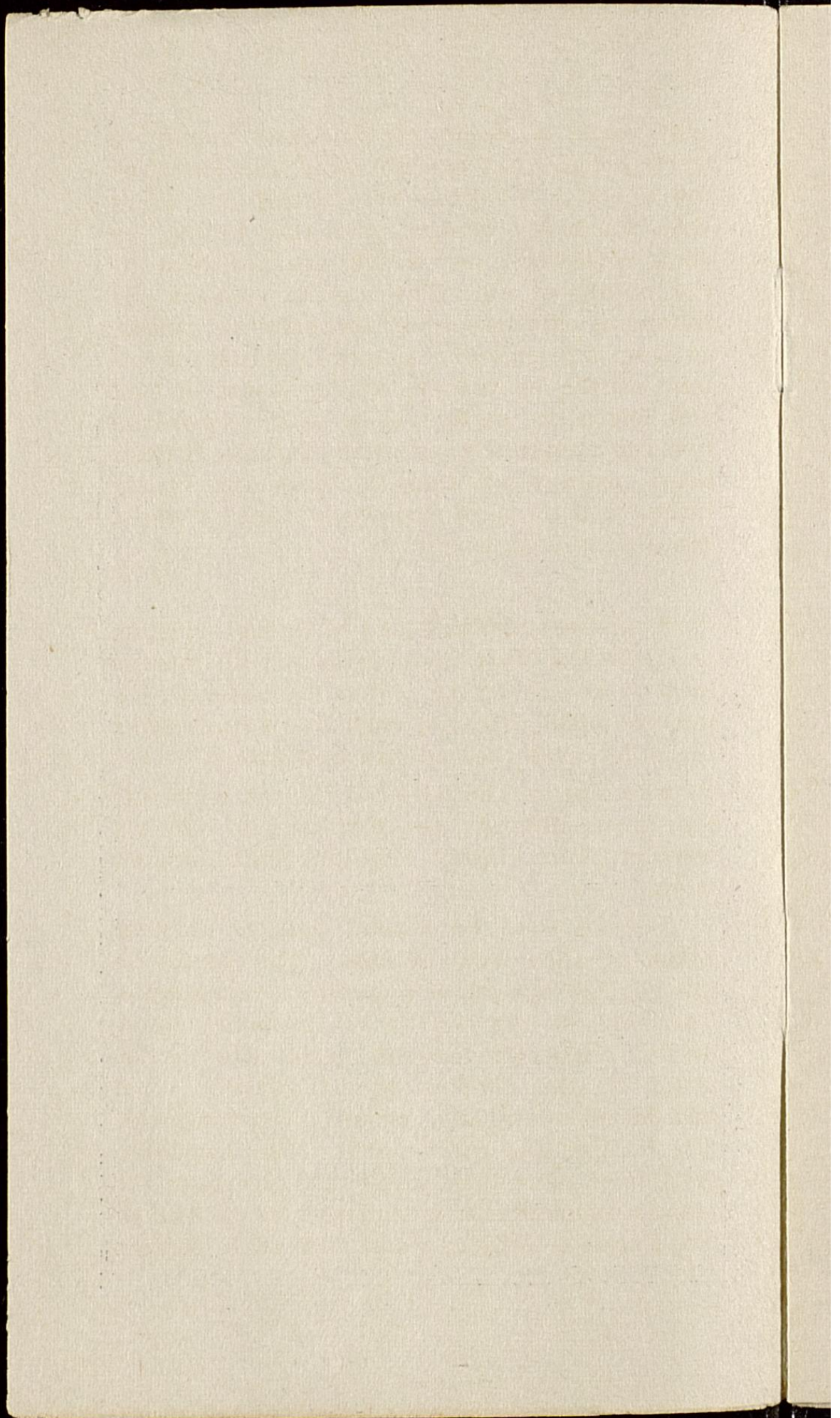
POEMS
BY
COTTON NOE

THE LOOM OF LIFE, Second Edition,
Price \$1.00

THE BLOOD OF RACHEL,
Price \$1.00

A BARNYARD FESTIVAL and
Other Poems, price25

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It seems a waste of time and money to write poems that are not read and loved by the people. Volumes are turned out every year which are praised, and that highly, by book reviewers, but which are not read by the public at all. The author esteems the following expressions of appreciation gathered from a glance over a large package of letters written by readers of *The Loom of Life* and *The Blood of Rachel* on their own initiative and apparently out of the fulness of their heart, even more than he does the kindly things said by book reviewers, some of whom are also quoted herein.

"Your drama, *The Blood of Rachel*, gripped me from the start and I read it with intense interest at one sitting. It is dramatic, thrilling, rounded, full, and each line swings after the other with the cadence of a brook."

"The fool, in *The Blood of Rachel*, a character most difficult to portray, is cleverly wrought out, closely rivaling Shakespeare's work."

"I have read the second edition of your *Loom of Life* with delight. The poems in this book reveal you as a poet pure and simple. The hum of the shuttle of dreaming fancy drones musically through verse after verse. Many of the shorter poems suggest vocal and instrumental airs as an accompaniment. 'To the Mocking Bird' marks to me the highest tide of your song, and ought to secure the poem a place in our anthologies as an American classic worthy to stand with such English

and Scots ones as the odes to the skylark by Shelley and Hogg respectively."

"Some of the descriptions in Amnemon are exquisite. Many of the passages contain true poetic enchantment revealing the poet's insight and clothing nature with the glory and freshness of a dream."

"The Blood of Rachel is powerfully written."

"Each poem bears within itself a bit of the beautiful optimistic philosophy of the creator."

"There is in all the poems the haunting beauty of the line and the refinement of conception that goes with great poetry."

"Every character in the drama is clearly drawn, from the most majestic to the most ludicrous, and there is no doubt that it is suitable for presentation on the legitimate stage."

"You have portrayed faithfully the melancholy steadfastness and the self-sacrificing spirit of the ancient Hebrews."

"You handle blank verse as few present day authors can, and your lines have an easy, sonorous flow that is little less than remarkable."

"The Blood of Rachel and Other Poems' shows you to be a great heart in which are mingled love of nature and love of man, one who has studied the language of the flowers, the birds and heart of little children and found them to be the same. Your poetry breathes an air of wholesome optimism which

should always and does characterize the architecture of true soul-building."

"Cotton Noe is making a name for himself as a writer of verse of extraordinary beauty and power."

"The book, *The Blood of Rachel*, puts him in the front rank of Kentucky poets."

"Cotton Noe is nothing, if not versatile."

"He is a contented philosopher and each poem is but an evidence that he loves the world, that the lilt of life does not pass him unheeded, that he is one who joys in the laughter of little children and sympathizes with the sweet foolishness of youth."

"I desire to express my appreciation of your wonderful volume of poems, *The Loom of Life*, many of which have greatly inspired me. 'The Redbird,' in my opinion, is a poem that will live along with the Psalm of Life and Recessional. As Maeterlinck has made the 'Bluebird' the symbol of happiness you have made the 'Redbird' the symbol of inspiration."

"Far beyond the ordinary are the poems in this pretty book, *The Loom of Life*. They are all delightful—melodious to the ear and running the gamut from grave to gay with frequent scintillations that are very near genius."

"In *The Loom of Life* the muse appears in a homespun dress of the linsey woolsey variety. There is evidence that the author belongs to the South; the dialect shows this and the local color confirms the guess. The muse is an unassuming maiden content to sing of every day incidents."

"The Loom of Life by Cotton Noe is a very fresh and original collection of poems. 'Wes Perkins' and 'Wes Banks' are very entertaining. Indeed they are all good."

"Many of the poems in The Loom of Life recall old scenes and customs, such as The Old Water Mill, The Old Spinning Wheel, The Old Drinking Gourd. In these poems Mr. Noe strikes his happiest notes. But he also fashions his sonnets deftly. Serious thought and feeling inform these. Among his best lyrics are the lines to the Redbird."

"That there is a revelation of genius in The Loom of Life is readily apparent even to the casual reader of this volume. But there is something more. It is the human sympathy and kindly love which made the poems of Burns immortal."

"The most of the poems in this volume, The Loom of Life, are short, but many of them are perfect gems."

"The material in the volume of poems entitled The Loom of Life the author, Cotton Noe, has woven into five parts: 'A Skein of Silver,' 'A Spool of Silk,' 'Gold and Gossamer,' 'Linen and Lace,' and 'A Hank of Homespun.' In the first division the author shows that he has looked deep into the beauties of the commonplace and in each poem he draws a lesson of beauty in the simplicity of the olden days."

"Cotton Noe makes his bread and butter by teaching at the State University, but like Whitcomb Riley, Cawein and others, he forgets his troubles and renews his youth by

plunging into the sea of Dreamland. Won't you take a night off and read his attractive little book, *The Loom of Life*? A taste or two of his metrical magic will do more to convince you than my sermonette."

"Every teacher in Kentucky ought to know by heart Cotton Noe's *Water Mill*."

"Your *Pro Patria* is the finest blending of poignant humor and smiling pathos I have ever seen in literature."

A writer of international fame in a personal letter says of *A Barnyard Festival*, a recent poem by the author, "I have read it over and over. It is a fresh, genuine, gushing, original note—amazingly limpid, very sure of what it sings."



REINCARNATION.

(To S. S. N.)

It may be that we lived and loved
In ages long ago,
And grazed our flocks together where
Sicilian waters flow;
Or watched the shepherds clouds and
dreamed
Of pastures in the sky,
Or played upon idyllic reed
For lovers passing by.
I may have been a Norman knight
And you a Saxon queen
Who held the castle of my heart
As part of your demesne.
Who knows but I was Romeo
And you the Capulet
That hated every Montague,
My stainless Juliet
Or maybe I was Abelard
And you were Eloise;
Perhaps we fled for life and love
Across the stormy seas.
I do not know, I do not care,
But this I ask of fate,
That I may never live again
Where you are not my mate.
I could not see the glint of gold
Upon another's hair,
I could not know the joy of life
Unless I found you there;
I would not have another's head
To rest upon my breast,
I could not let another touch
The lips that you have pressed.
Reincarnation here on earth
Without your hair, your eyes?
I could not know a second love
Beyond the shining skies.

—Cotton Noe.

THEN AND NOW

BY

J. T. C. NOE

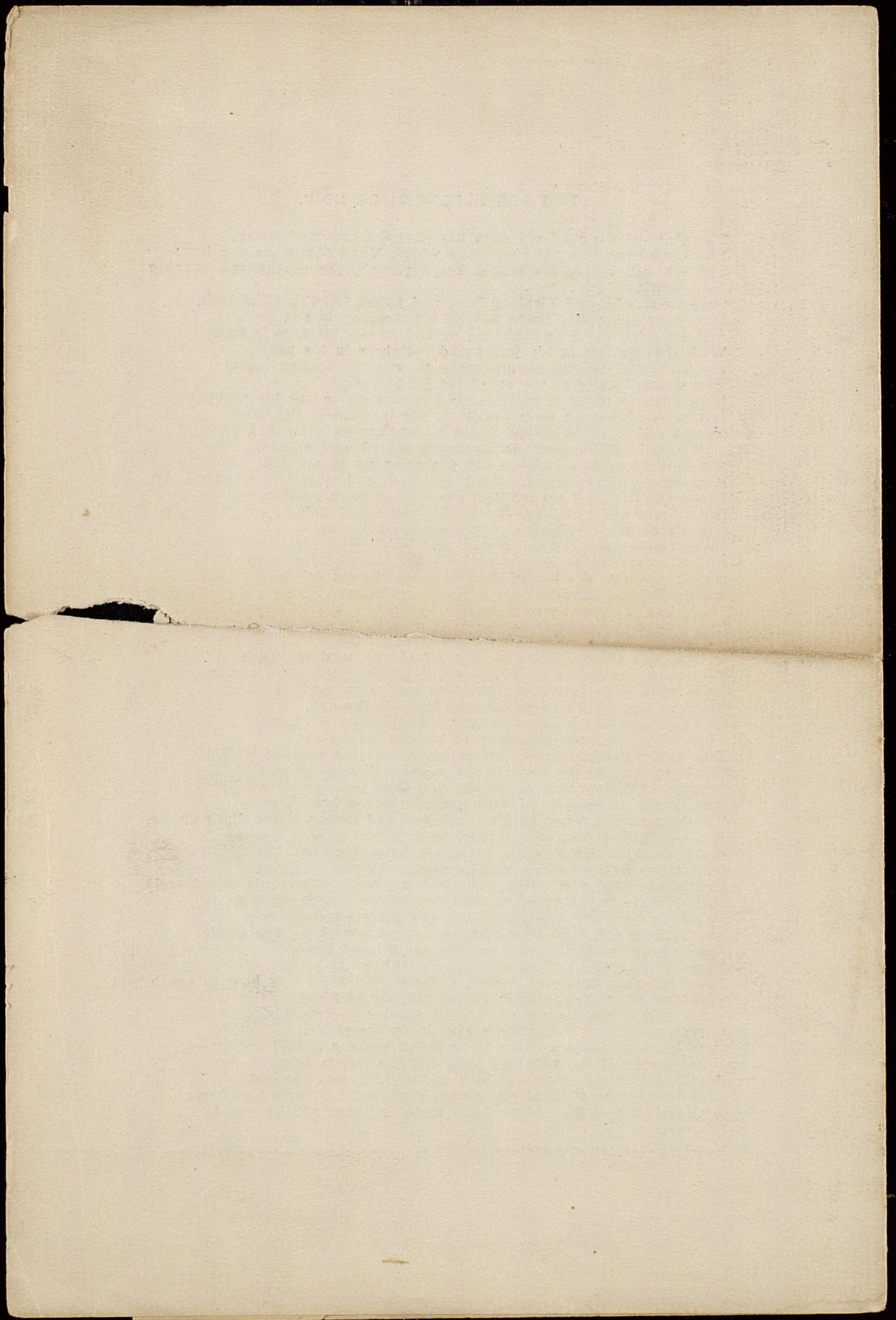


DOG IRON DAYS; OR THEN.

Oh, the Old Dog Irons! How the picture thrills my soul,
As I stir the ashes of the past and find this living coal:
When I blow the breath of memory it flashes into flame,
Which seems to me far brighter than the most undying fame.
Will you listen to the story of my early childhood days
When I read the mystic symbols in the embers and the blaze
Of the old wide-open fire place, where the backlog, all aglow
With its shifting scenes of fancy, was a motion picture show?
I know about your natural gas, your stoves and anthracite,
Your phonograph and telephone and incandescent light;
I've heard about the comforts and the use of gasoline,
And the educative value of a Pathe photo-scene;
The future of the bi-plane and the wonders of the press,
And the blessings of the wireless when a ship is in distress.
I marvel at invention and its all but magic art,
But the things that make for happiness concern the human heart.
Then why not praise the tallow-dip, the dog irons and the crane,
The kettle singing on the coals, or hanging to a chain?
The children gathered round the hearth to hear of early days—
The wildcat and the panther, the redman's sneaking ways;
The bravery of our fathers, the scalping knife and gun,
The courage of the women folks; I tell you, boys, 'twas fun.
We roasted sweet potatoes and we talked of Marion's men,
How they routed all the Red-coats, or slew them in the fen.
We learned to love our country and we swore to tell the truth,
And do no deed of treachery and never act uncouth;
To guard the honor of our name, and shield a virtuous home,
To read the proverbs and the psalms and love the sacred tome.
I know our home was humble then—rag carpet on the floor—
But the stranger found a welcome there, the latchstring on the door.
The well-sweep and the wood-pile and the ox-team in the shed,
Dried apples hung around the walls, and pumpkins overhead—
Not sanitary, I'll admit, nor stylish-like, nor rich,
But health and comfort and content; now tell me, which is which?
Then who can blame me that I love the good Old Dog-iron Days,
When men had hearts and character that fortune couldn't faze;
The years before the slashed skirts and the Turkish cigarettes,
When women wove their linsey clothes instead of devilish nets;
When children did the chores at night, nor ever heard of gym,
Or movements such as boy-scouts, yet kept in health and trim.
We spent our evenings all at home, and read and sang and played,
Or talked of work and feats of strength, or what our crops had made;
And when we mentioned quilting bees and apple-peeling time,
We had in mind our sweethearts and we sometimes made a rhyme:
'Twas then I read my future in the embers and the blaze,
And this is why I praise to-night the Good Old Dog-Iron Days!

THE AGE ELECTRIC; OR NOW.

The glory of the good old days has passed from earth away,
The lumbering loom, the spinning wheel, Maud Muller raking hay;
The old rail fence, the mould board plough, the scythe and reaping
hook,
Corn-shuckings, and Virginia Reel, and young folks' bashful look.
Now poor old father limps behind his motorcycle son
And sees the world go whizzing by and knows his race is run.
With rheumatism in his joints and crotchets in his brain,
He finds that he can hardly catch th' accommodation train.
Two dozen bottles of the oil of Dr. Up-To-Date
Would put to flight the rheumatiz and straighten out his pate;
But foggy folks don't have the faith, nor interest in the race,
They'd rather drive a slow coach horse than go at such a pace.
Efficiency! Efficiency! In business, church and school,
Where Culture in a Dunce's cap sits grinning on a stool,
And wondering where the thing will end, and what the prize will be,
When Intellect, all geared and greased, is mere machinery.
Old Homer and the Iliad, the Trojan and the Greek,
The Parthenon and Phidias, not ancient, but antique.
Great Caesar and the Gallic war and Virgil with his rhyme,
And Cicero have all gone down beneath the wheel of time.
And Dante now lies buried deep beneath the art debris,
Where Michael Angelo once wrought for immortality,
The Swan of Avon's not in school, but on the movie screen,
The Prince of Denmark cannot talk but still he may be seen
All history and literature, philosophy and truth
Would take about three evenings off of any modern youth
To master through the picture art if he the time could spare,
From vaudeville shows and joy-rides and tango with the fair.
The problem is to find an hour so busy is the age,
And so important is the work and tempting is the wage.
Then what's the use of poetry or history, anyhow?
Best turn your back upon the past and face the present NOW!
Get busy, and be on the job, the world will pay for skill.
It says: "Deliver me the goods, and then present your bill."
The family circle and the talk around the old hearth stone,
The sage advice, when back-logs glowed and grease lamps dimly shone,
Are mouldy pictures of the past, mere myths of long ago,
When grandsires had found out some things that children didn't know.
How many bushels can you raise upon your plot of ground?
How many blades of grass now grow where once just one was found?
Oh! Nature is the proper theme, but better Wordsworth drop,
San Jose scale and coddling moth will get your apple crop.
Ben Jonson and Will Shakespeare and Goldsmith all are dead.
Put nodules in alfalfa roots not dramas in your head.
Tomato canning's orthodox if done with due dispatch.
Don't let your daughter dream of fame, just show her how to patch.
The laws of sanitation soon will put the fly to flight,
Then stop tuberculosis next and win the hookworm fight.
If man could live a century it may be in the strife,
He'd learn to make a living if he didn't make a LIFE!
What matter if the primrose is beside the river's brim,
A yellow primrose growing there and nothing more to him,
He's caught the trick of sustenance (but lost his taste for rhyme),
And the oxen in the clover fields have had that all the time!



LOVE AND LUST

(Copyright 1921)

Cotton Noe

Two pictures—Love and Lust,
And each a three months bride.
Love is standing on a cottage porch,
And leaning lightly on a broom
She grasps in graceful but unjeweled hands.
A riotous heart has pumped
The rich red blood of health
Into her girl-like cheeks,
And blue eyes shimmer through a mist of joy,
As she strains them in the growing dusk,
To catch the figure of a swift approaching form.

Lust stands before Delmonico's
Beside her purple limousine,
A rope of Indian pearls
Encircles thrice her alabaster neck,
Entangling with a constellation of South Afric stars.
The clinging silk outlines a model for Rodin.

These pictures—both life size, in gilded frames—
Hang near the entrance,
In my Institute of Art.
And at its exit, Love and Lust again.
But Lust has lost the Rodin form.
The alabaster neck is creased and wrinkled
With thirty years of indolence and waste,
Though still encircled with a rope of pearls;
And larger constellations sparkle in her henna'd hair.
She lifts a red-eyed poodle
From a scarlet limousine
And strains it to her barren breasts—
The emptiness of riches in her face,
Though at her beck the luxury of the world.

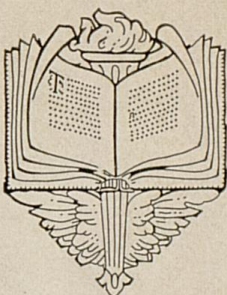
But Love now sits upon a Doric porch,
A little cherub in her lap,
And by her side three daughters—
All now mothers.
The wildest joy is in her heart,
For just a blessed moment more
And every child will leap in clamorous confusion
To grand paternal arms,
And leave their wondering madonnas,
And even Love herself,
To marvel on the ways of cherubim.

A CUMBERLAND ROMANCE

BY

JAMES THOMAS COTTON NOE

Read at the Jubilee Anniversary of the Marriage of
George Mock and Katherine Noe



HELD AT

Bardstown, Kentucky,

September Eleventh, Nineteen Hundred and Fifteen



KATHERINE NOE MOCK
Granddaughter of James Noe and Martha Waters

A CUMBERLAND ROMANCE

BY J. T. COTTON NOE.

Early in the day they passed the pinnacle,
And now the shadow of each human form
Was lengthening backwards like Lombardy poplars
Fallen toward the East.
For days the fairest maiden of the caravan
Had fevered—whether from malaria and fatigue,
Or more because of one whom they had left behind,
Beyond the wooded mountains,
Neither sire nor matron could agree.
But Martha Waters, as they laid her stretcher down
And prepared the camp for coming night,
Declared unless they rested here for days to come,
Her bones must bleach beside the trail
That led into the Dark and Bloody Ground.

And so they waited for the fever to abate,
But when they thought her strong enough,
A score of hardy pioneers trudged down
The slope and launched canoes and dug-outs
And a flat-boat in the turgid waters
Of the Cumberland, for heavy rains had fallen
And all the mountain streams were swollen
In these early days of June.
But the air was sweet with the odor
Of wild honeysuckle and the ivy
With its starry clusters fringed
The milky way of elder bloom
That filled each sheltered cove
Like constellations on a summer night.
But now the rains had ceased, the air
Was fresh and bracing, and each glorious day
Out-rivaled all the rest in beauty.

Lying on her pallet on the flat-boat,
The maiden breathed the fragrant atmosphere,
And drank refreshing whiffs of air
That drove the fever from her blood
And wakened dreams of conquest
In the wilderness toward which
Her life was drifting rapidly.
But how could she find heart for conquest?
Why seek this new land anyway, where only
And forever to card the wool and spin the flax
Would be the woman's portion?
Would ever in the forest or beyond it
In the rolling blue-grass,

Return the vision that was hers,
When only a few brief months ago
She watched the sea-gulls battling with the storm
Above the waves of Chesapeake Bay?
Oh, how that day was filled with meaning
For her now! For as the birds disported
With the whirlpools of the air,
A lover's magic words were whispered in her ear,
How that storm and stress of life to those that love
Are little more than winds to swallows of the sea.
But now, if hardship meant so little,
Why had he remained behind, when she
Was forced to go upon the long and weary journey?
Ah! Could it be he cared no longer for her love?
His arm was strong. Then was his heart
Not brave enough to conquer this new world,
Where savage lurked and wild beast made
The darkness dreaded by the most courageous soul?

For days the fleet had drifted down the river,
But now her boat was anchored to a tree
That grew upon an island in the Cumberland,
And every man and woman but the convalescent
Had gone ashore to stalk a deer or gather berries
That everywhere were found along the river bank.
But Martha Waters lay upon her bed and pondered,—
Dreaming day dreams, as she watched
A golden oriole who fed her young
In boughs that overhung the water,
And a vague unhappiness arose
Within her heart, until she tossed
Again in fever on her couch.
She could hear the roaring falls
A mile below, but she thought the sounding
Cataract the sickness booming in her ears again.
When she looked to eastward where the mountain
Rose a thousand feet, she saw a crown of wealth
Upon its crest of which no pioneer yet had dreamed.
Long she lay and marveled at its beauty,
Wondering how many ages would elapse before
The god of Mammon would transport its treasures
To his marts beside the sea.
Feverish she mused and pondered until at last she slept.
And then upon the little island,
A city rose as from the ocean wave,—
A city of a thousand streets, and every house
Was made from trees that grew upon the mountain.
Many were the palaces of wealth and beauty,
But those who dealt therein she did not recognize.
Strange were their faces and their manners haughty,
And while they lived in luxury and ease,
Others toiled at mill and furnace. Oh! The awful din
Of sledge and hammer, beating in her ears.
She woke. A storm seemed just about to burst in fury,

So loud and terrible was the roaring!
But the sky was clear. It is the booming
Of the Falls, for her boat has broke its moorings,
And now is rapidly drifting toward the cataract,
But four hundred yards away!

She leaped upon her feet and screamed for help.
It was impossible for her to swim ashore,
And her fever-wasted frame could find no strength
With which to steer the boat.
Again she saw the crown of wealth
Upon the mountain top, untouched by human hands.
But the island city now had faded from her vision,
The mountain lowered and the world grew dark.
Onward the boat shot faster toward the roaring falls.
But look! A race is on! A birch canoe,
Driven by as swift a hand as ever gripped
An oar, is leaping o'er the waves in mad pursuit.
With every stroke the Indian bark is gaining twenty feet.
Will it reach the flat-boat soon enough to save the girl?
But who is he that rides the fleet canoe?
No red man ever had an arm like that,
For already he has reached the speeding raft,
And with gigantic strength, he steers it toward the shore.
But no! The current is too swift!
A moment more and all will be engulfed within
The swirling flood. It is too late! Too late?
But love is swifter than the angry tide,
For like a mighty porpoise, wallowing in the wave,
The valiant hero leaps into the stream,
And holding Martha Waters in his strong right arm
High above the water, reaches shore
A hundred feet above the deadly precipice.

The air was growing chilly even on this summer night,
And the emigrants had gathered round a crackling fire,
Discoursing of the past, and listening to a modest tale of love.
Simply and unfaltering, James Noe related
How his heart had hungered back beside the Old Potomac,
Till he found he could no longer brook the passion
That grew stronger as the days of summer lengthened.
At last he started, and following every night
The blazing dogstar, and resting through the day till evening,
In just three weeks he reached the river
Where he found the birch canoe that rode
The seething waters like a greyhound of the ocean.

Then the maiden told her vision of the island city,
How its palaces and mansions, rich as gold and beautiful as crystal,
Were constructed by her people, toiling hundreds,
Sore and weary, oftimes cold and hungry.
She had seen them fell the forests,

Hew and mill and dress the lumber,
Till the soil and reap the harvests, gathering into others' garner.
Stalwart were these men and women, pure of heart
And strong of muscle, fitted for the tasks before them.
She had seen her brothers laboring at the forge and sounding anvil;
Sisters toiling at the wheel and distaff, heard them at the loom
While flying shuttle threaded warp with web of beauty;
Watched them till they fell asleep with weariness,
While the sons of leisure feasted.
Thus the maiden told her story, saying,
"Shall we undertake the journey? Plows are waiting
In the furrows back in Maryland, my people,
Back beyond the rugged mountain. There are harvests
Yet ungarnered, waiting for scythe and sickle.
Calculate the cost, and weigh it, for my vision is prophetic.
For my part, I choose this lover, for my guide and valiant leader.
He shall point the way forever,
Though he take the road that's darkest."

Then James Noe, the hero lover,
Who had never quailed at danger,
Trembling for his happy passion,
Rose and pointed toward the westward,
Toward the Pleiades descending,
Deep behind the gloomy forest.
"Let us face toward dark Kentucky, fell its forests,
Build its roads and bridge its rivers,
Give our children to the nation.

What though others reap our harvests,
Hoard the wealth we have created?
Ours shall be the nobler portion.
Blessed is the one that suffers,
If he spends himself for others.
Should the toiling millions falter,
Though they work for others' comfort,
Building homes they can not enter?
Christ was born within a manger,
May we not produce a leader,
Who shall save our nation's honor?
At tomorrow morning's dawning,
Ere the sunrise gild the tree-tops,
Let us take the darkling pathway."

Still the Pleiades are circling,
Still the dogstar glows in heaven,
But the oak and pine and poplar
All have gone from off the mountain,—
Passed into the marts of mammon,
By the hands of toil and labor.
Silent are the loom and distaff,
In the cabin and the cottage,
And the songs of scythe and sickle
Gathering in the golden harvests.

But the pain of drudgery lingers,
And the heart still longs and hungers
For the fruitage it shall gather,
Yet beyond the wooded westward.

Noble scion of this noble twain,—
Those who chose the darkling pathway,—
We proclaim you worthy daughter.
Like the heroine in virtue,
Like the hero aye undaunted,
You have never quailed at danger,
Never shrunk from any duty,
Seeing still the silver lining
When the clouds have lowered darkest.
You have sacrificed for others,
Toiled while leisure's sons were sleeping,
Weary slept, when they were feasting,
Thus fulfilling still the vision,
Of the island city.
We shall bless your name forever,
In the land beyond the sunset,
Where the stars of love grow brighter.

