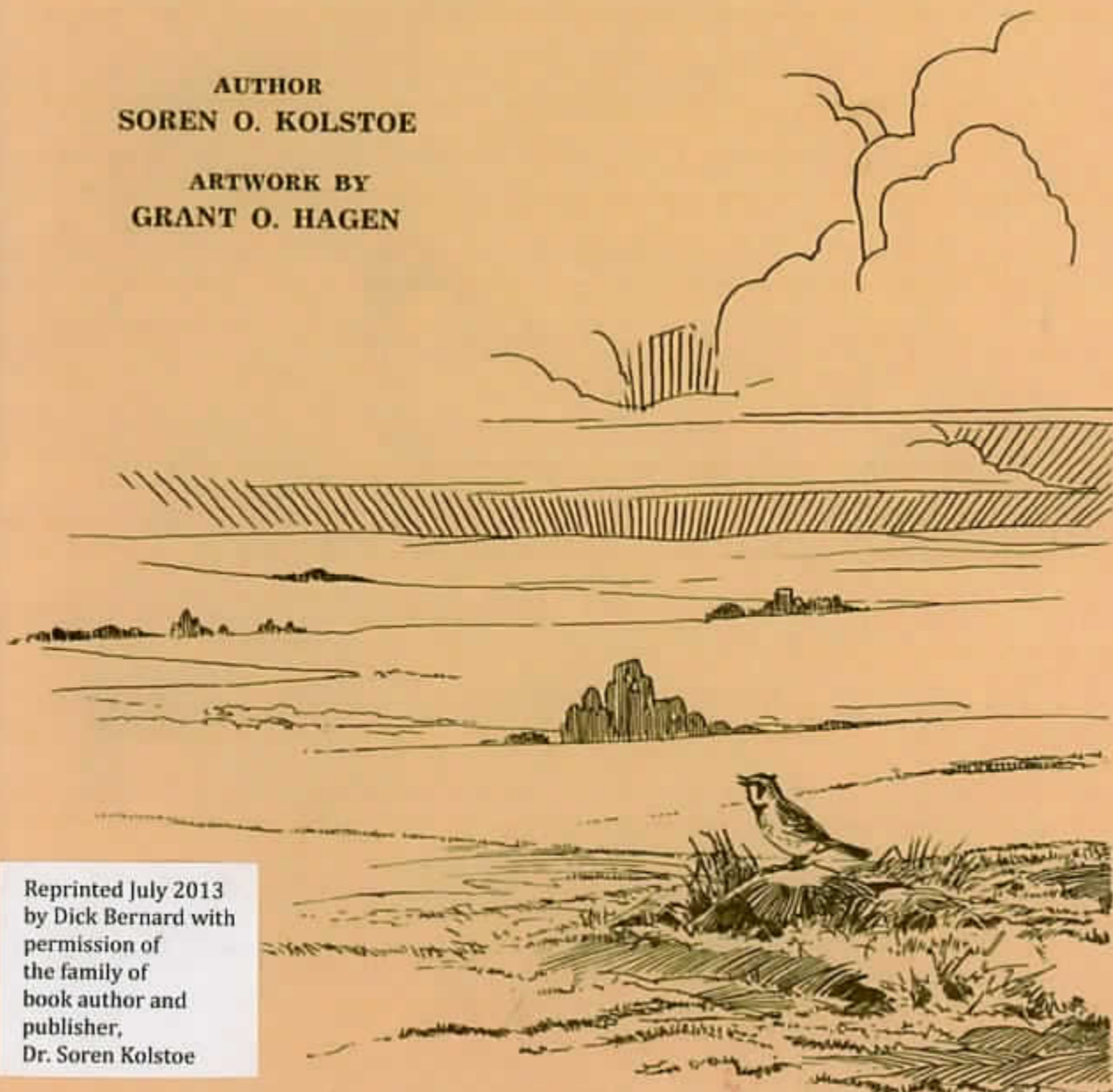


Lyrics of the Prairie

Part 3 of 3

AUTHOR
SOREN O. KOLSTOE

ARTWORK BY
GRANT O. HAGEN



Reprinted July 2013
by Dick Bernard with
permission of
the family of
book author and
publisher,
Dr. Soren Kolstoe



Undated photo of Dr. Kolstoe, taken at a State Fair in North Dakota
courtesy of the Kolstoe family

Blogpost with additional information at <http://www.outsidethewalls.org/blog/> July 21, 2013

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Internet source July 21, 2013: <http://webapp.und.edu/dept/library/Collections/og1213.html>
Dr. Kolstoe passed away February, 1978, Grand Forks, ND.

ELWYN B. ROBINSON DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS COLLECTION

COLLECTION: OGL#1213

DATES OF INTERVIEWS: 1974-1990

DATES OF SUBJECTS DISCUSSED IN THE INTERVIEWS: circa 1900-1983

SIZE: 1.25 linear feet, plus 58 audio cassette tapes

INTRODUCTION

ACQUISITION: The Oral History Interviews Collection was deposited in the Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection in 1990 (Acc.#90-1723).

ACCESS: Available for inspection under the rules and regulations of the Department of Special Collections.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains oral history interviews recorded on audio cassette tapes, as well as transcripts of most of the interviews. The interviews were conducted from 1974-1990, mostly by members of the Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections. The subjects discussed in the interviews range from circa 1900 to 1983.

What follows is a short summary of each interview, as well as a listing of the audio tape number for each recorded interview and the box and folder location of each transcript.

Soren Kolstoe

Interviewed by John Davenport, March 31, 1976

Dr. Soren Kolstoe was a long-time faculty member at Valley City State Teacher's College, and also wrote poetry. Kolstoe was born in 1888 in Norway, and grew up near Thief River Falls, Minnesota. He was a hunter and an environmentalist. Kolstoe donated a collection of approximately 400 eggs to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department in Bismarck. He devised a method of mounting and storing the eggs that prevented breakage. Kolstoe said collecting eggs requires a license, and to get a license, the eggs have to be used educationally or scientifically.

Kolstoe has been active in the Valley City Boy Scouts, a member of the North Dakota Wildlife Federation, the Audubon Society, the Isaak Walton League and Ducks Unlimited. He retired from teaching at Valley City State College in 1958. Then he worked for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, visiting schools and organizations and giving presentations on various species. Kolstoe authored a book entitled *Lyrics of the Prairie*, which combines poetry and pictures. In the interview, Kolstoe recited some of his poetry.

The events discussed date from his childhood, in the early 1900s, to the 1970s.

Interview: Audio Cassette Tape #834 and 835

Transcript: OGL#1213, Box 1, Folder 14 (31 pages)

Additional info

About Artist Grant O. Hagen

Lyrics of the Prairie is undated and was apparently self-published by Dr. Kolstoe and the business relationship between Mr. Hagen and Dr. Kolstoe is unknown. There are internet references to other work by the artist; he is apparently deceased, and may have been born about 1922 in Minnesota.

THE WETLANDS

*Ducks, ducks—hundreds of ducks,
The wetlands are vibrant with life.
The drakes are competing in courtship displays
And often in hot-blooded strife.*

*They zoom thru the air in their nuptial flight;
A swift and swooping routine;
The air and the earth seem charged with life
In this spirited springtime scene.*

*The glistening green of the mallard drakes
Gives a dominant note to the scene.
While the chocolate and white of the pintail male
Gives contrast, sharp and clean.*

*The jaunty tilt of the ruddy's tail
Is expressive of vigor and zest;
And even the spoonbill, ignoring his face,
Is trying to look his best.*

*The somber gadwall modestly tries
To enter the color display
And the baldpate with his creamy slick
Is beautiful too in his way.*

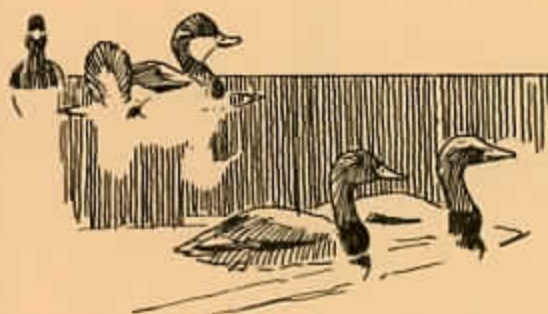
*Spritely teals in their powdery blue
And the half-moon on their face,
Bearing action and life wherever they go,
Seem scattered all over the place.*

*The redheads and cans sedately aloof
Are adding a dignified tone.
They're riding the waves with consummate skill
And a grace which is theirs alone.*

*Slate-colored coots, sporting ivory bills,
Add to the holiday mood;
And shorebirds ranging along the beach
Are searching the mud for food.*

*And over the rushes the marsh hawks soar
In their sweeping, quartering way,
Looking for sick or unwary birds
On which they commonly prey.*

*And so we gaze in wonderment
On this marvelous living display;
Lifted in spirit; impressed anew
With nature's wondrous way.*





WESTERN MEADOWLARK

*I hear the song of the meadowlark,
Clarion clear and sweet.
It's the voice of the plains — a message of joy,
A message of courage and strength.*

*His perch is a rock, and with sturdy stance
He hurls his message abroad.
He sings of the lofty blue above
And the spacious green below.*

*The freedom and sweep of this spacious realm
Is mirrored in his soul.
He's a feathered sprite — an epitome
Of the prairie's gracious charm.*

*Our state has chosen this matchless bird
As a symbol of beauty and worth—
The virtues we find in our prairie home—
The home of the meadowlark.*



CANADA GEESE

*Serene and high
The wild geese fly;
Their regal lines seem etched against the sky.
With solemn grace
They hold their place,
Each knows the ancient code by which they fly.
What hidden urge is stirring in their soul?
What ancient wisdom leads them to their goal?
But spring and fall
We hear them call
As high above they journey thru the sky.*



WHITE PELICAN

*Nature, in a whimsical mood,
Fashioned the pelicans.
With their ponderous bodies, their grotesque beaks,
They're Nature's harlequins.*

*They ride the water, beak on breast
With a pseudo-majestic mean;
They waddle ashore in their awkward way
In order to loaf and preen.*

*They scan the water for unwary fish
On which they usually feed,
And scoop them up in their dip-net beaks
With surprising deftness and speed.*

*Their nesting site is a filthy place,
Reeking with putrid smell,
Their woolly youngsters bicker and fight
From the time they are out of the shell.*

*To feed their young they regurgitate
A slimy, ill-smelling mess,
And the young will delve for the smelly stuff
With prodigious eagerness.*

*Its grotesque body and awkward gait
Makes it a creature absurd,
Its gluttonous habits and filthy ways
Make it hardly a loveable bird.*

*But pelicans aloft, their shimmering forms
Calmly floating in space
Are a picture superb, to delight the eye,
Of elegance and grace.*





THE WHISTLING SWAN

*High above the whistling swan
Wings his way with stately, measured beat.
His wide horizon lures him on,
He scarcely heeds the hazy land beneath.*

*A land where plodding creatures crawl
In labored movements, fettered to the ground;
Who hear the lofty clarion call
Of airborne swans, sedately northward bound.*

*His urge is north—and further north
To where the sunset blends into the dawn.
This is the land that gave him birth—
The shrine, the holy Mecca of the swan.*

*But there is much that must be done,
There's nest and mate and cygnets he must guard—
In the glory of the arctic sun
He finds his life's fulfillment and reward.*

*Then nature deals a dismal blow—
The molt that strips the glory from his frame.
He cannot fly—he dare not show,
He skulks amongst the rushes as in shame.*

*But ere the north has wrapped the pall
Of frozen darkness or the arctic night,
We hear again the clarion call
Of whistling swans in stately, southward flight.*

THE HUNTER

*What brings the hunter into the field,
Tho the weather be foul or pleasant?
What makes him trudge thro' brush land and weeds
In search of the wily pheasant?
What makes him sit in a miserable blind,
Or wade thru water and muck?
What makes him stand at a wind-swept post,
To wait for a white-tailed buck?*

*It's seldom hunger that brings him afield
Nor a primitive lust to kill;
Nor is it a need to prove his grit
And exhibit his prowess and skill.
It's scarcely a need for exercise,
This need is easily met;
Nor is it a need for sunshine and air,
These too, are easy to get.*

*It isn't just one but a number of things
That brings the hunter afield;
The forests and fields and the open air
And the pleasures that these can yield;
The joy of the hunt; stalking the game,
The hide and seek and the capture,
And the subtle joy of having a part
In the age-old drama of nature.*





TRIBUTE TO A DOG

*Rex, old boy, you're getting old—
Your head lies pretty heavy 'cross my knee,
Your glistening coat is getting dull,
You're not as frisky as you used to be.*

*But you are still a good old dog,
As fine a hunting pal as I could want.
Slow, perhaps—a little stiff,
But mighty wise and steady, on the hunt.*

*You look at me adoringly;
Thankful for each kindly word or nod.
How can I make you understand
That I am only me, and not a god.*

*But I can't know what's in your mind—
By and large I'd guess you're pretty smart.
But, Rex, I do appreciate,
The stout and sterling stuff that's in your heart.*



GOOSE HUNT

*The wild geese are calling loud and sharp,
They are coming in to feed.
They have seen the decoys, they're setting their wings
And reducing to landing speed.*

*I lie in my blind scarce daring to move
For they notice each movement or change,
Squeezing hard at the grip of my gun
Hoping they'll come within range.*


*They're dropping out and starting to feed
A couple of shot lengths away—
The question is "Will they move farther on
Or will they be coming this way?"*

*Thus I lie in my blind for an hour or two
And still they are moving away;
So, I guess that's it; I won't get a shot
And my hunting is thru for the day.*

*Oh well, it has happened often before
And no doubt it will happen again.
But I'll be back in the same old blind
Just as soon as I possibly can.*

*For I'm sure some morning my luck will change;
A fellow can't always lose;
Then my futile attempts will be promptly forgot
For at last I'll have gotten my goose.*





THE MALLARD HOLE

*In this beautiful land there's many a sight;
No telling which is the best.
Some like the charm of forests and lakes,
Others prefer the West.*


*But high on the list of magnificent scenes,
Is the startlingly beautiful sight
Of mallard ducks on whistling wings
Zig-zigging in to tight.*

*You sit in your blind all frozen and numb
In a miserable, drizzling dawn,
Thinking perhaps of the comforts of home
And the silly quest you are on.*

*Then all of a sudden the mallards come in,
Their landing gears set to light.
Gone is the chill and the aches in your bones
With the thrill of that beautiful sight!*

*And when I shall go to the hunting grounds
Where all good hunters go,
I trust I shall meet all the fellows there
Whom I cherished here below.*

*I know I shall like the celestial scene
And hearing the angels sing;
But I hope they will have a few potholes there
Where mallards come flying in.*



I MISSED THAT SHOT

*I missed that bird, I never touched a feather!
An easy shot on which I should not fail.
I took it straight, the pheasant chose to quarter,
And left the deadly charge behind his tail.*

*He sailed away in all his regal splendor,
Full of pride, while I stood humbly by.
He settled safe in well selected cover
As far away as well he deigned to fly.*

*And so it goes; the ups and downs of hunting—
I sometimes wonder if I am so hot.
I missed my chance, but luck may yield another,
And here is hoping, I won't miss that shot.*

A GUN

*Strange how much a man can love a gun;
A battered thing of senseless steel and wood.
I've used it hard and fear its day is done.
I'll get a new one, or at least I should.*

*A sleek new job with parts that really match,
A perfect product of the gunsmith's art;
Smooth, shiny blue, without a scar or scratch,
A beauty that should win a hunter's heart.*

*Yet all these beauties leave me strangely cold.
I find the parting harder than I thought;
I know they're good but still prefer the old,
To any new-style gun that can be bought.*

*This gun was more than just a gun to me,
A trusted hunting pal for many years.
It served me well and somehow seemed to be
A partner in my triumphs, hopes, and fears.*

*It's battered now and worn beyond repair;
Its hunting days it seems at last are done.
But still I'll keep it, cherish it with care.
Strange how much a man can love a gun!*



FISHING TIME

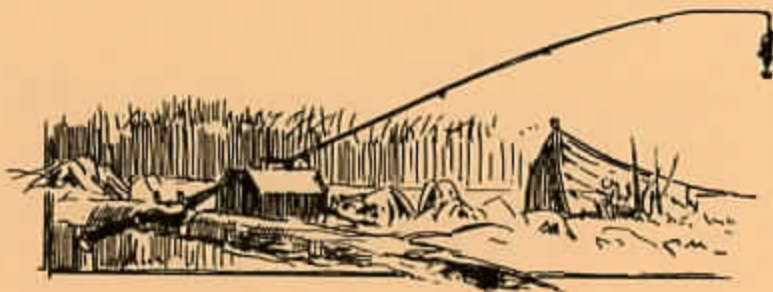
*It's spring and time to go fishin' again,
The birds and the flowers are here;
The leaves on the trees are young and clean,
And the water is fresh and clear.*

*Fishin' last season was middlin' to poor,
But this is another year—
I'm counting the days till the fishin' starts,
And brothers, I'll be there!*

*I got a new line and a spinner or two;
And oiled up the creaky old reel;
And I bought me a shiny, new-fangled lure,
With plenty of fish appeal.*

*It seems I can see those walleyed pikes,
Who loftily spurned my lure;
They're fanning the bars with their filmy fins,
And feeling smug and secure.*

*But I'll get them yet, those cagey old chaps,
That humbled my pride last year,
For it's spring and time to go fishing again,
And fishing is in the air.*

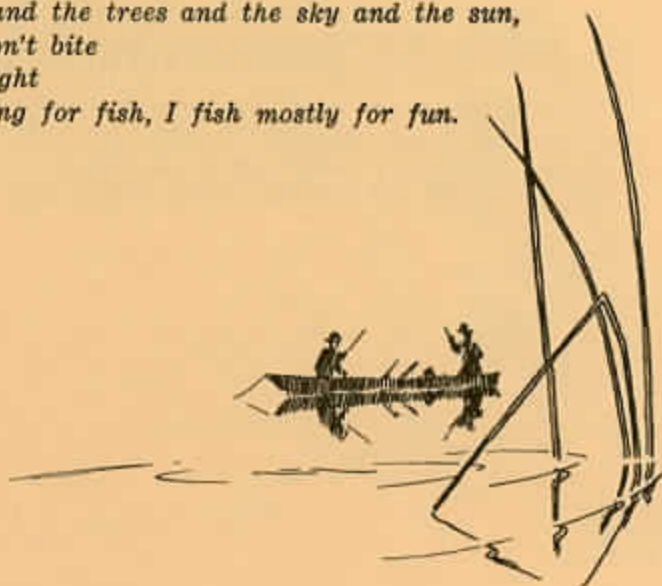


FISHIN' FOR FUN

*I go fishin' for fun;
I bask in the sun.
No sense in fishin' merely for fish!
I sit in the boat
And just let it float
And I leave to the fishes to do as they wish.*

*I like a good bite
And relish a fight
With a lunker that battles with all its might.
But I'll take the lurch
Of a spry little perch
That skitters and flips in its game little fight.*

*And with hours to spend
With a good fishing friend,
With the lake and the trees and the sky and the sun,
If the fishes don't bite
It is still all right
While I'm fishing for fish, I fish mostly for fun.*



A HUNTERS CREED

*I believe, this wonderous out-of doors
Was meant for us to cherish and enjoy;
And game was meant as part of nature's gift,
For us to use but never to destroy.*

*I believe, wherever I may hunt
I'm but a guest within the hunting site;
Permission given or merely so implied
Is mine by courtesy, and not a right.*

*I believe, that when my luck is good,
I should not boast, but take it well in stride;
And when it's bad, I should not fret too much;
And grousing, try to boost my sagging pride.*

*I believe, that none should use a gun
Who doesn't know how deadly it can be;
Who with his reckless antics on the hunt
Exposes all to risk of tragedy.*

*I believe, that hunting is a game
Where I and every player must be fair;
Obey the rules designed to give to all
A chance to get his just and proper share.*

*I believe, to gain a sportman's rank,
The finest accolade I could receive;
And may I never waver or forget—
This is my hunting creed; this I believe!*

A NATURE LOVER'S PRAYER

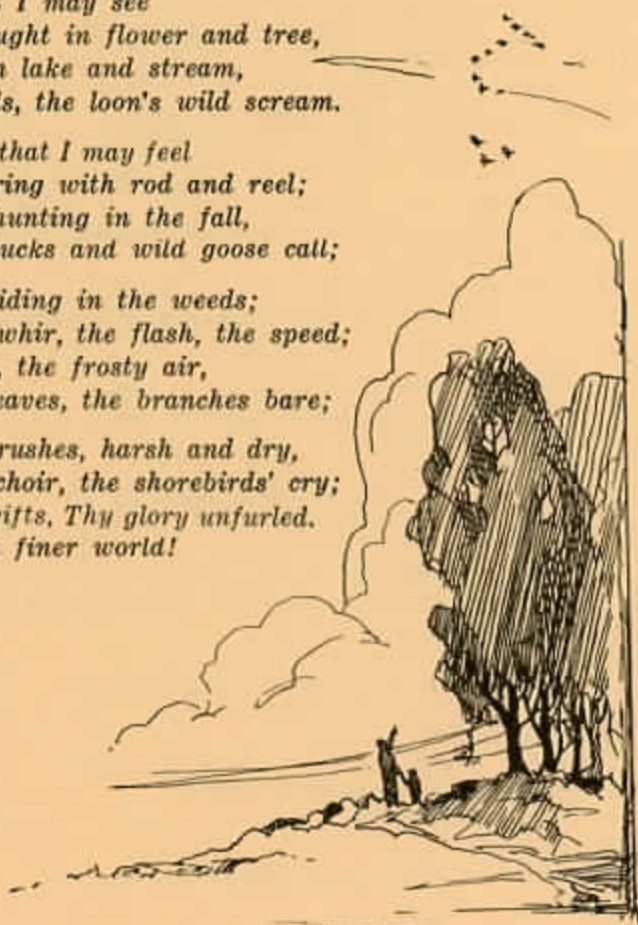
*I pray not for a better world,
For bluer skies, for fields more green;
More glory in the dawn unfurled,
For brighter stars, nights more serene.*

*I only pray that I may see
The beauty wrought in flower and tree,
In forest, hill, in lake and stream,
In songs of birds, the loon's wild scream.*

*I pray Thee too, that I may feel
The thrill of spring with rod and reel;
The joy of the hunting in the fall,
Mid quacks of ducks and wild goose call;*

*The pheasants hiding in the weeds;
The partridge's whir, the flash, the speed;
The tang of fall, the frosty air,
The crunch of leaves, the branches bare;*

*The marsh, the rushes, harsh and dry,
The blackbirds' choir, the shorebirds' cry;
They're all Thy gifts, Thy glory unfurled.
I pray not for a finer world!*



NORTH DAKOTA

*North Dakota,
Our prairie home,
We love you for your freedom and your space.
Your wide horizons
Plains, and hills,
Your stormy moods—your glorious sunny days!*

*We love you for
Your varied scenes
The valley flatness and the rolling plain,
The sculptured badlands,
Flat-topped buttes
Your grazing lands and rippling fields of grain.*

*We love you for
Your teeming life—
The birds that grace the land and dot the skies;
Your fleeing jacks,
Your graceful deer—
A place to fish — a hunter's paradise.*

*We love you for
The pioneers
Who bravely matched their brawn against your strength,
Who broke your sod,
Who braved your storms,
Who proved themselves as worthy of your wealth.*

*We love you for
The mineral stores
That lie beneath the fertile surface soil:
Your seams of coal,
Ceramic clays,
And deeper still, your precious pools of oil.*

*We love you for
Your varied climate:
Your storms, your dazzling sun, your bracing air.
Winter blizzards
Rage at times,
But nowhere else are heavens quite so fair.*

*We love you for
Your solid worth,
Your whimsies and your generosity,
Your gracious present,
Rugged past,
For what in future years you're yet to be.*

