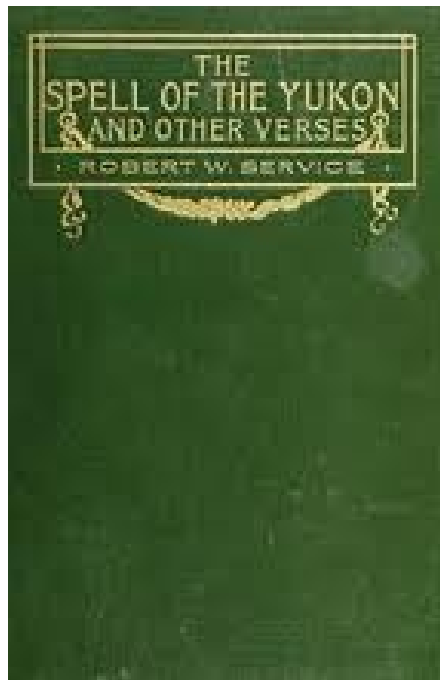




The Spell of the Yukon and Other Verses

Robert W. Service

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Early collection of Service's Yukon-themed poetry.

The Spell of the Yukon and Other Verses Details

Date : Published 1907 by Barse & Hopkins

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Author : Robert W. Service

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From Reader Review The Spell of the Yukon and Other Verses for online ebook

Rebecca Lewitt says

interesting view of life in the Yukon. Gritty at times. I liked best the poems about nature, but the story poems were interesting too.

Shana Feltham says

This book is a compilation of poems talking about nature and adventure in the wilderness. I am not usually a big fan of poetry however, this book holds a particularly special memory to me. When I was younger, before my mom got both hips replaced and my dad both knees, together as a family we loved hiking. We would always adventure out on weekends to explore new trails and seek new sights, and every time we go out, we would bring this book. When we got to wherever we were going, or if we sat down to take a break, my dad would pull out this book and read us a poem. I heard these poems so many times that my sister and I began to memorize them, and we would shout out the words before my dad ever got to reading them. Throughout our adventures, this book became ripped, mud stained, and water ruined to the point where you can no longer read half the poems and the pages are falling out. Nonetheless, my dad will still pull it off the shelf from time to time and we will shout out the poems from memory.

Elizabeth says

"But the stars throng out in their glory,
And they sing of the God in man;
They sing of the Mighty Master,
Of the loom his fingers span,
Where a star or a soul is part of the whole,
And weft in the wondrous plan."

Al says

Robert Service, the bard of the Yukon, was born in England. While he knocked about a bit as a youth, he mostly worked in banks in Canada. His rough verses celebrate the hard, dangerous life of the loners who worked and fought in the wildernesses of the world, particularly the Yukon. Despite the condescensions of contemporary poets, his work was wildly popular and ultimately made him rich. A prolific writer, he went on to write novels and many other volumes of verse. This was his first published book, and contains a few of his classics, including "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" and "The Spell of the Yukon." Great stuff.

Erich Angermayr says

Excellent Poems from the Yukon

I discovered this little book in a bookstore in Whitehorse. That was back in 1996, 100 years after the Klondike gold rush. I hauled it, together with a bunch of other books, over the Chilkoot Pass. I read it in during the long nights lit by the midnight sun. It was with me in the canoe while paddling the Yukon River. Robert Service's poems never left me since. I'm glad I found the Kindle version now. If you love wilderness, adventure, and a piece of history of the North, you will love this book.

Samuel Wells says

Robert Service was a poet of wild places and raw humanity. Yet his metrical poetry rhymes to the beat of a human heart. It can be muscular and irreverent at times but it is truly a human voice worth knowing. In this collection are gathered: The Cremation of Sam McGee, The Spell of the Yukon, The Pines, and many more. There are still alive today those that will quote Robert Service if the night is just right and the campfire smolders to a comfortable glow. A new generation might stoke these flames anew. "And each forgets, as he strips and runs / With a brilliant, fitful pace, / It's the steady, quiet, plodding ones / Who win in the lifelong race..." (from The Men that Don't Fit In).

Greg says

Service was a Brit who was drawn by the lure of the Yukon in the 19th Century. He wrote some great poems about the pull of nature and adventure, a common reaction to the Industrial Revolution and its constraints on freedom and nature. Unfortunately, they are all pretty similar. Still, good stuff and easy to read. A kid would appreciate these poems, if you could get one to read them.

Bcoghill Coghill says

A must read for everyone who has lived in Alaska or the Yukon. This is our poetry legacy.

John says

Robert Service has an interesting perspective on life and nature. He does have some really odd stuff here, even harsh and hard to take. But he does capture, I believe, the spirit of many of those who went to the frozen north more than 100 years ago to seek wealth in the gold fields. "The Cremation of Sam McGee" is one of my favorites. And I heard it was one of Pres. Ronald Reagan's favorites too.

This book is in the public domain and I downloaded it free on the Kindle App on my Android phone.

Lisa says

A poet of such power and simplicity deserves better than the long-winded analysis elsewhere. Service is

funny, earthy, and a great writer.

"The cremation of Dan McGee" is one of the best poems ever.. "The Northern Lights have seen queer sights, but the queerest they ever did see..."

Ron says

Robert W. Service (1874-1958) burst upon the scene in 1907 with this collection of poems, published first in Canada as *Songs of a Sourdough*, where it was an immediate success. Born of a Scots family in England, he was living at the time in Whitehorse, Yukon, as an employee of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. He had already knocked about the West from Mexico to Vancouver. The bank job seems to have been an attempt to settle down and draw a regular paycheck.

He had been writing poems from boyhood and was encouraged to begin setting stories and impressions of the Great White North to verse. Thus originated two of his most famous story poems: "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" and "The Cremation of Sam McGee." Those and more poems harked back to the 1898 gold rush that centered on Dawson City, 330 miles (532 km) down the Yukon River, which Service had yet to visit. . .

Read my review at my blog.

Joanne G. says

When I was helping to clean out my mother-in-law's home after her death, I found this tiny volume printed in 1907. It was given as a graduation gift to someone in our family, but everyone is gone who could have told me. My husband had been watching a show about gold mining in Alaska; the show and the scenery intrigued me into reading the book. What a difficult time people had at the turn of the previous century in merely surviving in the wild Yukon, much less finding their fortune. Service's poetry gave a taste of Alaska in its wild days.

*There are strange things done 'neath the midnight sun
By the men who toil for gold.
The arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold.*

Ryan says

One of my earliest memories is of my grandfather reading to me from this tome, so I was delighted to recently rediscover Robert Service. I am not generally a fan of poetry collections, but this one is special. Robert Service had a magical knack for putting the beauty of Alaska into poetry. Though most readers know him for his humor and storytelling, for me his strongest suit is his ability to put grandeur and emotion into words. His ability to describe the feelings from listening to piano music in a bar in "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" far outstrips the story told, and his descriptions of the Alaskan wild in "The Spell of the Yukon" bring the vibrant land to life for his readers. I'll be keeping this volume near at hand for a long time to come.

Peter Pactor says

I have read this book several times, but I bought this copy, the 1907 edition, and decided to read it again.

Robert Service was Ronald Reagan's favorite poet, but he has been one of mine since I first heard "The Cremation of Sam McGee sixty years ago. Reading his works at different stages of my life has had different effects on me—all of them positive.

I enjoy how his words whack together, whether with internal rhyme, anaphora, alliteration, etc. They catch the flavor of the topic of his poem. The poems are well constructed. But whether you have an interest in the poetic devices, his poems capture the spirit of the Yukon Gold Rush. They sing of the men and women, bold and undaunted, strong and weak, good and bad and their struggles to live in such a rough and demanding land. He sings of the land and the power of place to draw people to it, regardless, of the challenges of being there. He embraces of spiritual effects of man's relationship to nature and to his God.

I think the last poem in the book, L'envoi, sums up his book. I shall quote it below:

You who have lived in the land,
You who have trusted the trail,
You who are strong to withstand,
You who are swift to assail:
Songs have I sung to beguile,
Vintage of desperate years,
Hard as a harlot's smile,
Bitter as unshed tears

Little of joy or mirth,
Little of ease I sing;
Sagas of men of earth;
Humanly suffering,
Such as you all have done;
Savagely faring forth,
Sons of the midnight sun,
Argonauts of the north.

Far in the land God forgot
Glimmers the lure of your trail;
Still in your lust you are taught
Even to win is to fail.
Still must you follow and fight
Under the vampire wing;
There in the long, long night
Hoping and vanquishing.

Husbandman of the Wild,
Reaping a barren gain;
Scourged by desire, reconciled
Unto disaster and pain;
These, my songs, are for you,
You who are seared with the brand,
God knows I have tried to be true;

Please God you will understand.

Tamhack says

I did like the language he used in his poetry. Especially, his description of the Yukon. His descriptions bring vivid images to my mind and they are very accurate because I live in Alaska.

The actual emotion evoked by the poetry was very sad and very lonely.

Some of my favorite lines/quotes:

"I'm wanting so much as just finding the gold. It's the great, big, broad land 'way up yonder,
It's the forests where silence has lease;
It's the beauty that thrills me with wonder,
It's the stillness that fills me with peace." The Spell of the Yukon

"I am the land that listens, I am the land that broods;
Steeped in eternal beauty, crystalline waters and woods.
Long have I waited lonely, shunned as a thing accurst.
Monstrous, moody, pathetic, the last of the lands and the first;
Visioning camp-fires at twilight, sad with a longing forlorn,
Feeling my womb o'er pregnant with the seed of cities unborn.
Wild and wide are my borders, stern as death is my sway," The Yukon

I think my most favorite poem of his is "The Call of the Wild."
"Have you seen God in His splendors, heard the text that nature renders?
(You'll never hear it in the family pew.)
The simple things, the true things, the silent men who do things-
Then listen to the Wild-it's calling you."

My second favorite poem of his is "The Pines"
"We sleep in the sleep of ages, the bleak barbarian pines;
The gray moss drapes us like sages, and closer we lock our lines,
And deeper we clutch through the gelid gloom where never a sunbeam shines.
On the flanks of the storm-gored ridges are out black battalions massed;
We surge in a host to the sullen coast, and we sing in the ocean blast;
From empire of sea to empire of snow we grip our empire fast."

From "Grin":
"If the future's black as thunder, don't let people see you're blue;
Just cultivate a cast-iron smile of joy the whole day through;
If they call you "Little Sunshine," wish that they'd no troubles too-"

From "The Reckoning":
"Time has got a little bill-get wise while yet you may,
For the debit side's increasing in a most alarming way;
The things you had no right to do, the things you should have done,
They're all put down; it's up to you to pay for every one.
So eat, drink and be merry, have a good time if you will,

But God help you when the times comes and Foot the bill."

From: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem...>

"Born in Lancashire, England to a bank cashier and an heiress, poet Robert William Service moved to Scotland at the age of five, living with his grandfather and three aunts until his parents moved to Glasgow four years later and the family reunited. He wrote his first poem on his sixth birthday, and was educated at some of the best schools in Scotland, where his interest in poetry grew alongside a desire for travel and adventure.

In his youth, he worked in a shipping office and a bank, and briefly studied literature at the University of Glasgow. Inspired by Rudyard Kipling and Robert Louis Stevenson, Service sailed to western Canada in 1894 to become a cowboy in the Yukon Wilderness. He worked on a ranch and as a bank teller in Vancouver Island six years after the Gold Rush, gleaning material that would inform his poetry for years to come and earn him his reputation as "Bard of the Yukon." Service traveled widely throughout his life—to Hollywood, Cuba, Alberta, Paris, Louisiana, and elsewhere—and his travels continued to fuel his writing.

A prolific writer and poet, Service published numerous collections of poetry during his lifetime, including *Songs of a Sourdough or Spell of the Yukon and Other Verses* (1907), which went into ten printings its first year, *Ballad of a Cheechako* (1909) and *Ballads of a Bohemian* (1921), as well as two autobiographies and six novels. Several of his novels were made into films, and he also appeared as an actor in *The Spoilers*, a 1942 film with Marlene Dietrich.

A casual usage of what would today be considered ethnic slurs complicates contemporary readings of his work, though his epic, rhymed, often humorous poems about the West's wilderness, Yukon gold miners, and World War I show the narrative mastery, appetite for adventure, and eye for detail that enabled him to bridge the spheres of popular and literary audiences.

He was a correspondent for the *Toronto Star* during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, and served in World War I as an ambulance driver in France. After the war, Service married Germaine Bougeoin and they resided mainly in the south of France until his death.

Service's two-room cabin in the Yukon, which he lived in from November 1909 until June 1912 while writing his Gold Rush novel *The Trail of Ninety-Eight* (1911) and his poetry collection *Rhymes of a Rolling Stone* (1913), is maintained as a historic site for visitors."

sage says

I find reviewing poetry really difficult, so I don't have anything particularly brilliant to say. I loved this book a lot. It's authentic Canadian pioneer days, gold rush stuff, and it's got the meter of Scottish drinking songs. I read quite a lot of it out loud -- couldn't help it, it begs to be sung if at all possible.

Parts are paeans to how awesome men (sic) who are strong and adventurous enough to survive life in the Yukon are and how they don't want any weaklings or cripples. Other parts are about how the Yukon will kill you, no matter how awesome you think you are. Other parts are about kissing your sweetheart goodbye and going off into the mountains for the rest of your life and all the grief you feel over causing them pain, but you're just that kind of misfit guy.

All the women are harlots or mothers...except there are like two mentions of actual wives, who are left. And there are several mentions of the ideal life with a wife and home. And there are several depictions of the

Yukon itself as feminine, almost like an earth goddess -- wife and mother and lover all together.

The other thing I noticed was the poem about living in a city of Men, except they all had a Siwash girl, who was (according to the white male speaker) wracked with guilt over betraying her people by whoring herself out in such a way. Makes me very, very curious about that bit of women's history and how long ago it was taking place, what with the Yukon gold rush being way more recent than the Spanish colonial gold rush of the 16th-18th centuries.

Anyway, good poems, great window on history and culture, possibly great drinking songs for western Canadians. It probably helps to have been there, which I have, so I have no trouble imagining the scenery he's describing. It's truly awe-inspiring, and I love that he goes to the sublime, God-loving place with it so often. The land is stunning and deadly, and I can only imagine it before roads and dynamite, wandering with only a sled team and a campfire.

It reminds me of my History of the American West course. I wish there'd been more Canada in it.

Becky says

The collection of poetry is very, very dear to my heart. My father owned this book, and despite its weight, carried it with him any time he went rock climbing or back packing. Later, when we were children sitting at the campfire Dad would recite the longer poems to us- Cremation of Sam McGee, Spell of the Yukon, and the Shooting of Dan McGrew- all from memory. They were good times.

I eventually found the exact same copy type that my dad had carried with him all those years at a library sale. Now it sits proudly in my library.

Poetry is not normally for me, but Robert W. Service was an amazing man. His poetry is evocative and beautiful, but it's never snobbish or confusing. It's very straight forward. He was nick-named the People's Poet, and I truly believe that anyone can enjoy his works. He panned for gold in the Yukon, he lived carefree in France as a Bohemian, and he served in the first World War as an ambulance man- the pain, love, action, and heroism of his life are all present in his poems.

I do enjoy some of his other collections, but Spell of the Yukon will always be one of the most important books in my life.

This book is offered for free as an eBook by Project Gutenberg, and is offered as an audiobook by Librivox.

T.J. says

Jack London + Rudyard Kipling.

Also known as Songs of a Sourdough, this is a collection of wonderfully rhythmic verse about Klondike speculators, wild men, tramps, gamblers, and adventurers down on their luck.

The two greatest hits are here--"The Shooting of Dan McGrew" and the even better "The Cremation of Sam McGee"--but there are few others, including "Fighting Mac" which blends Kipling-level jingoism with a

poignancy. The true story, which I didn't know, is also worth investigating.

Some of it is doggerel, but most is just fun. Great for reading aloud.

Gerald Koskinen says

Thank goodness this was a short book. I asked a patient what his favorite book was and followed through my quest and read it. A poetry book, which I am fine with, but skip to page 26 "The Cremation of Sam McGee" it's one of a few good ones. Better yet, take my word for it!

Mark Nenadov says

Great poems!
