

THE LAKE IN THE FOREST

O Manitou, O Spirit of the earth,
Maker and monarch of this silent mere,
These ridges and this lonely atmosphere,
Savage and bright and pure, to whom the dearth
And sickness of the world and men's distress
Appeal, and thou art kind,
O Spirit of the virgin wilderness,
O Worker unconfined,
Here in thy fastness and thy dreaming-place,
I feel thy living presence, face to face.

Thy soul is in the splendour of the night,
 When silent shadows darken from the shores,
 And all thy swaying fairies over floors
 Of luminous water lying strange and bright,
 Are spinning mists of silver in the moon ;
 When out of magic bays
 The yells and demon laughter of the loon
 Startle the hills and raise
 The solitary echoes far away ;
 Then art thou present, Spirit, wild as they.

O Monarch of the morning, Manitou ;
 The sun, thy first-born, from the gleaming hills
 Uptilts the handles of his jar, and fills
 This moss-embroidered bowl of rock and dew
 With torrent-light and ether. From his eye,
 Divine and wide with day,
 Belated broods of spectres break and fly,
 And cringe, and curl away—
 Thin mists—the ferns of midnight, and her bines—
 That vanish tangled in the topmost pines.

O Master of the noon ; the dusky bass
 Lurk in the chambers of the rocks—the deep
 Cool crypts of amber brown and dark—and sleep,
 Dim-shadowed, waiting for the day to pass.
 The shy red deer come down by crooked paths,
 Whom countless flies assail,
 And splash and wallow in the sandy baths,
 And cry to thee to veil
 Thine eye's exceeding brightness and strike dead
 The hot cicada singing overhead.

O Spirit of the sunset ; in thine hand
 This hollow of the forest brims with fire,
 And piling high to westward builds a pyre
 Of sombre spruces and black pines that stand,
 Ragged, and grim, and eaten through with gold.
 The archèd east grows sweet
 With rose and orange, and the night acold
 Looms, and beneath her feet
 Still waters green and purple in strange schemes,
 Till twilight wakes the hoot-owl from his dreams.

O Manitou, O Spirit of the spring,
 That hast the wind-flower in thy fertile care ;
 Thy footstep falls, and all the forest air
 Grows gentle at the whisper of thy wing ;
 And always with the fising of the frogs
 The rivers swell, and soon
 The shouting woodmen drive the herded logs ;
 And ever, night or noon,
 Soft violet or unfathomable blue,
 The cup is poured, the censer smokes anew.

O Spirit of the Autumn ; ah ! the trees,
 Thy maskers, that make revel for an hour,
 In gold and ruby, till the blighting power
 Strips them, and all their rustling braveries
 In urns and earthen caskets lays away ;
 But ãnou, O Spirit, still
 Armest thy children for the bitter day ;
 The plants observe thy skill,
 Whose secret buds in woolly folds abide,
 And the fur thickens on the fox's hide.

O Manitou, O Spirit of the snow,
 That buries, each and all, the moose's track,
 The woodman's shanty, and the hunter's shack,
 Lord of the hissing winds that plunge and blow,
 Till pin -s and powdered birches are embossed
 With loaded white and gray;

O Manitou, O Master of the frost,
 The frost that hath its way,
 The waters are forsaken by the loon,
 And the ice roars beneath the winter moon.

Thy soul is in the silence, Manitou,
 The silence of the winter, which is sleep;
 The silence of the midnight made more deep
 By the deer's footstep and the loon's halloo,
 The lashing wings and laughter of the wild;
 The silence of the Fall,
 Windless at even when the logs are piled,
 When every stroke or call
 Awakes the fairies from their caves, and thrills
 In taunting echoes up the cloven hills.

O Maker of the light and sinewy frame,
 The hunter's iron hands and tireless feet;
 O Breath, whose kindling ether, keen and sweet,
 Thickens the thews and fills the blood with flame;
 O Manitou, before the mists are drawn,
 The dewy webs unspun,
 While yet the smiling pines are soft with dawn,
 My forehead greets the sun;
 With lifted heart and hands I take my place,
 And feel thy living presence face to face.