

TEACHERS: Monday, October 21, was set aside by the Michigan legislature to commemorate the birthday of Will Carleton, Michigan's poet laureate. This has just recently been brought to our attention. Here is the text of that law:

340.368 Public holidays; salaries; commemorative exercises on other days

Sec. 368. The following days, namely: The first day of January, commonly called New Year's day; the thirtieth day of May, commonly called Memorial day; the fourth of July, commonly called Independence day; the first Monday in September, commonly called Labor day; and the twenty-fifth of December, commonly called Christmas day; all Saturdays and all days appointed or recommended by the governor of this state or the president of the United States as days of fasting and prayer or thanksgiving shall, in all the public schools of this state, be treated and considered as public holidays: Provided, That whenever any legally designated public holiday shall fall on Sunday the Monday following shall be deemed to be a public holiday in all public schools; and on such above specified days there shall be no school sessions in any of such public schools of this state. The salary of school officers and teachers shall in no way be affected by reason of the dismissal of school on any of the above mentioned days. On the following days, namely: The twelfth day of February, commonly called Lincoln's birthday; the twenty-second day of February, commonly called Washington's birthday; the seventeenth day of September, being the date of the adoption of the federal constitution; the twelfth day of October, commonly called Columbus day; the twenty-first day of October, commonly called Carleton's birthday; the twenty-seventh day of October, to be known as Roosevelt's birthday; and the eleventh day of November, commonly called Veteran's day, it shall be the duty of all school officers and teachers to have the schools under their respective charge observe such mentioned days by proper and appropriate commemorative exercises, or by arranging the school work to teach the significance of these days, and such days shall not be considered as legal holidays for schools. P.A. 1955 Act No. 269 Sec 368.

As we realize this is rather sudden, on the following pages you will find material we have printed for your convenience. If this material is presented to your first hour class, it will remove the necessity of having a special assembly. Please keep your students in class for this dedication. Thank you.

Will Carleton

William McKendree Carleton was born on a farm two miles east of Hudson, Michigan, on October 21, 1845. His father was John Hancock Carleton, a direct descendant of Edward Carleton of Rowley, Massachusetts in 1638. His mother was Celestia E. Smith (Carleton).

Even as a young boy, Will seemed more interested in journalism and writing than he did in plowing the family land near Jackson. He received local schooling, then went on to Hillsdale college where he graduated in 1869. He then became editor and part owner of the Hillsdale Standard the town newspaper. After holding this position for a time, Will went on to become editor of the Detroit Weekly Tribune.

In 1871, while reporting a divorce case, Carleton wrote his first poem to be published, Betty and I are Out. Published in Harper's Weekly, this poem swept the country. Harper's then published his next three poems, Out of the Old House, Nancy, Gone with a Handsomer Man, and Over the Hill to the Poor House.

Over the Hill to the Poor House proved to be Will's most famous poem. It was his style to emphasize the sentiments of the common people with whom he had been raised. He could express the feeling that people had about such things as death, love, divorce, and, in this case, old folks homes. Over the Hill to the Poor House sparked a nationwide reform movement to improve homes for the aged.

Carleton changed his name to Will Carleton in 1873, presumably so he would not be confused with William Carleton, an Irish writer of a century earlier.

He then published a series of books, Farm Ballads (in 1873), Farm Legends (1875), and Farm Festivals (1881). Also published was Young Folks Centennial Rhymes (1876). During this time, Will moved to Boston (in 1878) and married Adora Miles Goodell. They settled in Brooklyn, New York in 1882.

After living in the city, Will published another series of books, City Ballads (1885), City Legends (1889), City Festivals (1892), and Rhymes of Our Planet (1895).

Carleton became a lecturer and went on extensive tours of the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. He was one of the first poets to recite his own works. Because of this he received a considerable income.

In 1894, he founded an illustrated monthly magazine, Every Where. Most of his later works appeared in this magazine including verse, short stories, and a few minor plays. Three more books were published, Songs of Two Centuries (1902), Old School Days (1902), and Drifted In (1908). Although Over the Hill to the Poor House is his most widely known work, such late books as Drifted In, and Old School Days still contain some of his finest poems.

On December 18, 1912, Will Carleton died in Brooklyn. His poems leave us few memorable words or magic sentences. But they still express the feelings and sometimes anguish of the people he loved. In all his poems, the heart predominates. As Charles Allen Dinsmore put it, "He sympathized with the life of the humble

and interpreted their feelings without exploiting their peculiarities." For this he will never be forgotten.

Here are a few of the more memorable quotes from Will Carleton, taken from John Bartlett's familiar quotations.

"But ships long time together
Can better the tempest weather
Than any other two."

One and Two. Stanza 3.

"Over the Hill to the poor house I'm
trudgin' my wear way"

Over the Hill to the poor House. Stanza 1.

"If there's a heaven upon the earth, a
fellow knows it when
He's been away from home a week, and
then gets back again."

Goin' Home Today. Stanza 7.

Suggested reading:

Farm Ballads by Will Carleton

Drifted In by Will Carleton

Will Carleton by A. Elwood Corning

The following poem is the one that our beloved Will is most remembered for:

OVER THE HILL TO THE POOR-HOUSE

Over the hill to the poor-house I'm trudgin' my weary way--
I, a woman of seventy, and only a trifle gray--
I, who am smart an' chipper, for all the years I've told,
As many another woman that's only half as old.

Over the hill to the poor-house--I can't quite make it clear!
Over the hill to the poor-house--it seems so horrid queer!
Many a step I've taken, a-toilin' to and fro,
But this is a sort of journey I never thought to go.

What is the use of heapin' on me a pauper's shame?
Am I lazy or crazy? am I blind or lame?
True, I am not so supple, nor yet so awful stout;
But charity ain't no favor, if one can live without.

I am ready and willin' an' anxious any day
To work for a decent livin', an' pay my honest way;
For I can earn my victuals, an' more too, I'll be bound,
If anybody is willin' to only have me round.

Once I was young an' han'some--I was, upon my soul--
Once my cheeks was roses, my eyes as black as coal;
And I can't remember, in them days, of hearin' people say,
For any kind of a reason, that I was in their way!

'Tain't no use of boastin', or talkin' over free,
But many a house an' home was open then to me;
Many a han'some offer I had from likely men,
And nobody ever hinted that I was a burden then!

And when to John I was married, sure he was good and smart,
But he and all the neighbors would own I done my part;
For life was all before me, an' I was young an' strong,
And I worked my best an' smartest in tryin' to get along.

And so we worked together; and life was hard, but gay,
With now and then a baby to cheer us on our way;
Till we had half a dozen: an' all growed clean an' neat,
An' went to school like others, an' had enough to eat.

An' so we worked for the child'rn, and raised 'em every one;
Worked for 'em summer and winter, just as we ought to 've done;
Only perhaps we humored 'em, which some good folks condemn;
But every couple's own child'rn's a heap the dearest to them!

Strange how much we think of our blessed little ones!--
I'd have died for my daughters, I'd have died for my sons;
And God he made that rule of love; but when we're old and gray,
I've noticed it sometimes somehow fails to work the other way.

OVER THE HILL TO THE POOR-HOUSE cont.

Strange, another thing; when our boys an' girls was grown,
And when, exceptin' Charley, they'd left us there alone;
When John be nearer an' nearer came, an' dearer seemed to be,
The Lord--of Hosts!--He came one day an' took him away from me!

Still I was bound to struggle, an' never to cringe or fall--
Still I worked for Charley, for Charley was now my all;
And Charley was pretty good to me, with scarce a word or frown,
Till at last he went a-courtin', and brought a wife from town.

She was somewhat dressy, an' hadn't a pleasant smile--
She was quite conceity, and carried a heap o' style;
But if ever I tried to be friends, I did with her, I know;
But she was hard and haughty, an' we couldn't make it go.

She had an edication, an' that was good for her;
But when she twitted me on mine, 'twas carryin' things too fur;
An' I told her once, 'fore company (an' it almost made her sick),
That I never swallowed a grammar, or 'et a 'rithmetic.

So 'twas only a few days before the thing was done--
They was a family of themselves, and I another one;
And a very little cottage one family will do,
But I never have seen a mansion that was big enough for two.

An' I never could speak to suit her, never could please her eye,
An' it made me independent, an' felt it like a blow,
When Charley turned ag'in me, an' told me I could go!

I went to live with Susan; but Susan's house was small,
And she was always a-hintin' how snug it was for us all;
And what with her husband's sisters, and what with child'rin three,
'Twas easy to discover there wasn't room for me.

An' then I went with Thomas, the oldest son I've got;
For Thomas's buildings 'd cover the half of an acre lot;
But all the child'rn was on me--I couldn't stand their sauce--
And Thomas said I needn't think I was comin' there to boss.

An' then I wrote to Rebecca, my girl who lives out West,
And to Isaac, not far from her--some twenty miles at best;
And one of 'em said 'twas too warm there for any one so old,
And t'other had an opinion the climate was too cold.

So they have shirked and slighted me, an' shifted me about--
So they have wellnigh soured me, an' wore my old heart out;
But still I've borne up pretty well, an' wasn't much put down,
Till Charley went to the poor-master, an' put me on the town!

Over the hill to the poor-house--my child'rn dear, good-by!
Many a night I've watched you when only God was nigh;
And God 'll judge between us; but I will al'ays pray
That you shall never suffer the half I do to-day!

APPLES GROWING

Underneath an apple-tree
Sat a dame of comely seeming,
With her work upon her knee,
And her great eyes idly dreaming.
O'er the harvest-acres bright,
Came her husband's din of reaping;
Near to her an infant wight
Through the tangled grass was creeping.

On the branches long and high,
And the great green apples growing,
Rested she her wandering eye,
With a retrospective knowing.
"This," she said, "the shelter is,
Where, when gay and raven-headed,
I consented to be his,
And our willing hearts were wedded."

"Laughing words and peals of mirth
Long are chanded to grave endeavor;
Sorrow's winds have swept to earth
Many a blossomed hope forever.
Thunder-heads have hovered o'er--
Storms my path have chilled and shaded;
Of the bloom my gay youth bore,
Some has fruited---more has faded."

Quickly, and amid her sighs,
Through the grass her baby wrestled,
Smiled on her its father's eyes,
And unto her bosom nestled.
And with sudden, joyous glee,
Half the wife's and half the mother's,
"Still the best is left," said she:
"I have learned to live for others."

"WHY SHOULD THEY KILL MY BABY?"

Why should they kill my baby?---for he seems the same to me
As when, in the morning twilight, I tossed him on my knee,
And sowed for him hopes to blossom when he should be a man,
And dreamed for him such a future as only a mother can.

I looked ahead to the noon-time with proud but trembling joy;
I had a vision of splendor for my sweet, bright-eyed boy;
But little enough I fancied that, when he had gained renown,
Base Envy's poisoned bullet would suddenly strike him down!

Why should they want to kill him? Because he had cut his way
Through Poverty's gloomy woodland out into the open day,
And sent a shout of good cheer to those who were yet within,
That honor is born of striving, and honesty yet can win?

Or was it because from boyhood he manfully bared his breast
To fight for the poor and lowly, and aid the sore oppressed?
Ah me! the world is working upon a treacherous plan,
When he who has struck for mankind is stricken down by man!

Or did they begrudge his mother the hand he reached her still,
No odds how high he clambered up Fortune's glittering hill?
For in his proudest life-day he turned from the honors of earth,
And came and tenderly kissed me--the mother who gave him birth.

Shame on the wretch who struck him, and prays that the blow may kill!
And pity for his mother, if she be living still!
May God in mercy aid him his black crime to atone,
And help me to forgive him--I cannot do it alone!

[The aged mother of the late President Garfield is reported to have exclaimed, "Why should they kill my baby?" upon hearing the news of his attempted assassination. Her words inspired Mr. Carleton to write this poem.]

OUR ARMY OF THE DEAD

By the edge of the Atlantic, where the waves of Freedom roar,
And the breezes of the ocean chant a requiem to the shore,
On the Nation's Eastern hill-tops, where its cornerstone is laid,
On the mountains of New England, where our fathers toiled and prayed,
Mid old Keystone's rugged riches, which the miner's hand await,
Mid the never-ceasing commerce of the busy Empire State,
With the country's love and honor on each brave, devoted head,
Is a band of noble heroes--is our Army of the Dead.

On the lake-encircled homestead of the thriving Wolverine,
On the beauteous Western prairies, with their carpeting of green,
By the sweeping Mississippi, long our country's pride and boast,
On the rugged Rocky Mountains, and the rich Pacific coast,
In the listless, sunny Southland, with its blossoms and its vines,
On the bracing Northern hill-tops, and amid their murmuring pines,
Over all our happy country--over all our Nation spread,
Is a band of noble heroes--is our Army of the Dead.

Not with musket, and with sabre, and with glad heart beating fast;
Not with cannon that had thundered till the bloody war was past;
Not with voices that are shouting with the vim of victory's note;
Not with armor gayly glistening, and with flags that proudly float;
Not with air of martial vigor, nor with steady, soldier tramp,
Come they grandly marching to us--for the boys are all in camp.
With forgetfulness upon it--each within his earthy bed,
Waiting for his marching orders--is our Army of the Dead.

Fast asleep the boys are lying, in their low and narrow tents,
And no battle-cry can wake them, and no orders call them hence;
And the yearnings of the mother, and the anguish of the wife,
Cannot with their magic presence call the soldier back to life;
And the brother's manly sorrow, and the father's mournful pride,
Cannot give back to his country him who for his country died.
They who for the trembling Nation in its hour of trial bled,
Lie, in these years of triumph, with our Army of the Dead.

OUR ARMY OF THE DEAD cont.

When the years of Earth are over, and the cares of Earth are done,
When the reign of Time is ended, and Eternity begun,
When the thunders of Omniscience on our wakened senses roll,
And the sky above shall wither, and be gathered like a scroll;
When, among the lofty mountains, and across the mighty sea,
The sublime celestial bugler shall ring out the reveille,
Then shall march with brightest laurels, and with proud, victorious
tread,
To their station up in heaven, our Grand Army of the Dead.

THE HOUSE WHERE WE WERE WED

I've been to the old farm-house, good-wife,
Where you and I were wed;
Where the love was born to our two hearts
That now lies cold and dead.
Where a long-kept secret to you I told,
In the yellow beams of the moon,
And we forged our vows out of love's own gold,
To be broken so soon, so soon!

I passed through all the old rooms, good-wife;
I wandered on and on;
I followed the steps of a flitting ghost,
The ghost of a love that is gone.
And he led me out to the arbor, wife,
Where with roses I twined your hair;
And he seated me down on the old stone step,
And left me musing there.

The sun went down as it used to do,
And sank in the sea of night;
The two bright stars that we called ours
Came slowly unto my sight;
But the one that was mine went under a cloud--
Went under a cloud alone;
And a tear that I wouldn't have shed for the world,
Fell down on the old gray stone.

But there be words can ne'er be unsaid,
And deeds can ne'er be undone,
Except perhaps in another world,
Where life's once more begun.
And maybe some time in the time to come,
When a few more years are sped,
We'll love again as we used to love,
In the house where we were wed.

'TIS SNOWING

First Voice

Hurra! 'tis snowing!

On street and house-roof, gently cast,
The falling flakes come thick and fast;
They wheel and curve from giddy height,
And speck the chilly air with white!
Come on, come on, you light-robed storm!
My fire within is blithe and warm,

And brightly glowing!

My robes are thick, my sledge is gay;
My champing steeds impatient neigh;
My silver-sounding bells are clear,
With music for the muffled ear;
And she within--my queenly bride--
Shall sit right gayly by my side;

Hurra! 'tis snowing!

Second voice

Good God! 'tis snowing!

From out the dull and leaden clouds,
The surly storm impatient crowds;
It beats against my fragile door,
It creeps across my cheerless floor;
And through my pantry, void of fare,
And o'er my hearth, so cold and bare,

The wind is blowing;

And she who rests her weary head
Upon our hard and scanty bed,
Prays hopefully, but hopeless still,
For bright spring days and whip-poor-will;
The damp of death is at her brow,
The frost is at her feet; and now

'Tis drearily snowing.

'TIS SNOWING cont.

First Voice

Hurra! 'tis snowing!

Snow on! ye can not stop our ride,
As o'er the white-paved road we glide:
Past forest trees thick draped with snow,
Past white-thatched houses, quaint and low;
Past well-filled sleigh and kindly word,

Right gayly going!

Snow on! for when our ride is o'er,
And once again we reach the door,
Our well-filled larder shall provide,
Our cellar-doors shall open wide;
And while without 'tis cold and drear,
Within, our board shall smile with cheer,

Although 'tis snowing!

Second Voice

Good God! 'tis snowing!

Rough men now bear, with hurried tread,
My pauper wife unto her bed;
And while, all crushed, but unresigned,
I cringe and follow close behind,
And while these scalding, bitter tears--
The first that stain my manhood years--

Are freely flowing,

Her waiting grave is open wide,
And into it the snow-flakes glide.
A mattress for her couch they wreathe;
And snow above, and snow beneath,
Must be the bed of her who prayed
The sun might shine where she was laid;

And still 'tis snowing!

APPLE-BLOSSOMS

Underneath an apple-tree
Sat a maiden and her lover:
And the thoughts within her he
Yearned, in silence, to discover.
Round them danced the sunbeams bright,
Green the grass-lawn stretched before them;
While the apple-blossoms white
Hung in rich profusion o'er them.

Naught within her eyes he read
That would tell her mind unto him;
Though their light, he after said,
Quivered swiftly through and through him;
Till at last his heart burst free
From the prayer with which 'twas laden,
And he said, "When wilt thou be
Mine for evermore, fair maiden?"

"When," said she, "the breeze of May
With white flakes our heads shall cover,
I will be thy brideling gay--
Thou shalt be my husband-lover."
"How," said he, in sorrow bowed,
"Can I hope such hopeful weather?
Breeze of May and Winter's cloud
Do not often fly together."

Quickly as the words he said,
From the west a wind came sighing,
And on each uncovered head
Sent the apple-blossoms flying:
"'Flakes of white!' thou'rt mine," said he,
"Sooner than thy wish or knowing!"
"Nay, I heard the breeze," quoth she,
"When in yonder forest blowing."

THE FADING FLOWER

There is a chillness in the air--
A coldness in the smile of day;
And e'en the sunbeam's crimson glare
Seems shaded with a tinge of gray.

Weary of journeys to and fro,
The sun low creeps adown the sky;
And on the shivering earth below,
The long, cold shadows grimly lie.

But there will fall a deeper shade,
More chilling than the Autumn's breath;
There is a flower that yet must fade,
And yield its sweetness up to death.

She sits upon the window-seat,
Musing in mournful silence there,
While on her brow the sunbeams meet,
And dally with her golden hair.

She gazes on the sea of light
That overflows the western skies,
Till her great soul seems plumed for flight
From out the window of her eyes.

Hopes unfulfilled have vexed her breast,
Sad smiles have checked the rising sigh;
Until her weary heart confessed,
Reluctantly, that she must die.

And she has thought of all the ties--
The golden ties--that bind her here;
Of all that she has learned to prize,
Of all that she has counted dear;

The joys of body, heart, and mind,
The pleasures that she loves so well;
The grasp of friendship, warm and kind,
And love's delicious, hallowed spell.

And she has wept, that she must lie
Beneath the snow-wreaths, drifted deep,
With no fond mother standing nigh,
To watch her in her silent sleep.

And she has prayed, if it might be
Within the reach of human skill,
And not averse to Heaven, that she
Might live a little longer still.

THE FADING FLOWER cont.

But earthly hope is gone; and now
Comes in its place a brighter beam,
Leaving upon her snowy brow
The impress of a heavenly dream:

That she, when her frail body yields,
And fades away to mortal eyes,
Shall burst through Heaven's eternal fields,
And bloom again--in Paradise.