

THE GOLDEN AGE

The sun slants warm on the fragrant field,
And the old town's full with the summer's yield.
The dry dirt road winds over the hill;
Old homes along it, stately and still,
Sheltered from noonday under the trees
Are undisturbed save for humming of bees.
Beyond the shade in the heat of the day
The tall field grasses gently sway.
Bird songs warble on the aimless air,
And above is the blue sky, wide and fair.
Under the bridge flows the listless brook
Past the dry stones it lately forsook,
Leaving its moss all shriveled and brown,
Scarce seeping through where once it splashed down.
In peace and quiet the old town lies
Under New England's summer skies;
In the fragrant fields chirp the crickets shrill,
While the old town dreams along the hill--
The whole world basks in the mellow haze,
And who can be sad in these golden days?
The new-mown hay lies sweet in the sun,
The mower has stopped with its swath half done.
The farmer leans on his mower, and now,
Wiping the sweat from his weary brow,
Rests, and of his cool cider deeply drinks,
And gazing on the distant hills, he thinks.

A hay-wagon creaking down the road
In the heat and the dust with a heavy load--
Slowly the horse shambles through the heat,
While with lagging rein and dangling feet,
Through the mellow sunlight of afternoon,
Softly humming an aimless tune,
Henry rides homeward to the farm
For to stow the mowing in the barn.
--Then he restlessly looks at the sky and the trees,
And leaning forward intent to seize
The light that has flashed across his mind,
Grasping the gleam, he leaves all behind:
With halting breath and eager look
He tremblingly draws in a little book;
Then speeding up the old gray horse,
Homeward he takes his eager course.
While with lusty strokes he stows the hay,
Through the open door streams the fading day,
And the cool air stirs as the west grows red,
And the blue sky deepens overhead.
---Bent o'er his desk with his draftsman's tools,
Carefully Henry plots and rules;
While above in the shadow stand all in a row,
Where the lamp shines up on Cicero
And farm books, poetry and many things;
And somewhere in the dark a lone cricket sings.
And in the lamp's flickering yellow light
Henry labors on deep in the night.

With the folks gathered round on Saturday night

In the old parsonage, cheery and bright,
In a corner beside the open door,
While all make ready and clear the floor
--The rugged plank floor that their fathers laid--
Henry tunes up on "The White Cockade".
And long and gay in that Saturday night
His accordion's notes swell full and bright.
--Sunday morning, clear and cool,
Henry continues to plot and rule:
For the dream of his life has at last come true
In a wondrous light that is great and new.
With quick neat strokes and eager look
He lays out his Vehicle from the little book.
--Then Sunday church, then a friendly chat,
Of the Vehicle, crops, and this and that--
--A second-hand chassis in the shed,
And a first-hand idea in Henry's head:
From his work in the sunshine 'mid haystacks and ears
He toils in the dusk over levers and gears;
Cheered on by all, for his triumph is theirs,
He earnestly labors and drills and repairs;
Until on a glorious mellow day
Henry puts his tools away.
With the doors flung wide, and glad and proud,
He drives into the light 'mid the happy crowd
Where all wait outside the barn in the sun--
Henry's Vehicle at last is done!

Hail! Hail! Hail! to our Henry's front wheel drive!
Hail! Hail! Hail! to the works of them that strive!
Hail! Hail! Hail! as sure as I'm alive!
In triumph
Comes Henry
In his homemade vehicle!

A flood of joy fills all as down
The road drives Henry through the town;
For the end of his struggles, defeats and fears
Has come in the glad climax of weary years--
He steps on the throttle and lets her roll,
For summer is soaring in his soul:
Through many tests, and with many loads
Wildly he drives on the old dirt roads;
Or they listen, beside him in the seat,
To Henry colorfully explain his feat.
--Then Henry's busy for many a day,
Making ready to go away.
He stows the mowing and closes the farm,
And loads the Vehicle out in the barn;
And for one last night his accordion's sound
In the parsonage gathers the folks around.
Then in the misty coolness of the morn,
Silent, and a bit forlorn,
While Henry works busily over his car,
Shuffling about or gazing afar,
Or stooping curiously to inspect a wheel,
The folks gathered round a strange loneliness feel--
And loud sing the crickets across the vale,
And long into the dusk lies Henry's trail.
With rattle and roar he waves goodby
To the farm, the folks, the trees, the sky--
Across the blue hills where the haze hangs curled,
Henry has gone to convince the world!

Gone
Away into the sunset,
Gone
As sure as I'm alive,
Gone
In his rickety invention--
Henry's gone to sell 'em
His
 front
 wheel
 drive!

A great sad wideness the whole world fills
As Henry drives on o'er the lone dark hills
Into the sunset's gold and rose,
Where all across the west there goes
In the fading glare of the twilight's close
The road whose ending no man knows.
And in the dawn-mist before the busy day
Along the quiet highway he takes his way.
Down the strait long road the world reels by
And the engine drones and his hopes sing high,
Until 'neath the vaulting smoky skies,
Behold! the City before him lies--
And all is vast and strange and shattering
And roar and dust and speed and clattering.
But the hall is dim and quiet inside
As the doors swing shut on Henry's stride--
With fast-beating heart and quick-seeking look
He seeks out a number from the little book;
Till through a dingy window he looks down far
To where, parked and locked, there stands his Car.
Then he nervously sits in the ancient chair
And gazes with racing thoughts to where,
Behind the ground-glassed panelled door,
The fate of the Vehicle lies in store;
He views magazines on the table all in a row,
But he takes from his pocket--Cicero!
--Then long behind the ground glass pane,
Eloquently Henry explains--in vain.

Painfully Henry turns to go--
A moment he stays, and in his woe
Smiling sadly, he murmurs low,
"Cicero, the answer is no!"
--Out under the dark and lowering sky,
Where the world and the gusty wind roar by,
And a million lights glare in the dark
And the skyscrapers tower black and stark,
Henry continues to desperately strive,
And eloquently lays forth his front wheel drive;
But drearily hope and money go,
And he turns away, for the answer is No:
Until on a raw and windy day
He starts on the weary homeward way.
Under the weeping drizzly sky
The puddles and hot dog stands reel by;
The road lies black and wet ahead
And fumes of exhaust and oil spread
Heavily o'er the monotonous lines
Of traffic, and dripping highway signs.
And sadly back to the shut up farm,
Sadly into the shadowy barn

Henry drives; and gathered round
That night, they hear not his accordion's sound,
But wearily he tells his tale
How the dream of his life has come to fail--
And of Henry's sorrow each feels his part,
For each shares the darkness of his heart---

Come
From out the misty distance,
Come
As sure as I'm alive,
Come
Back from the wondrous City--
But Henry didn't sell 'em
His front wheel drive.

Bowed o'er his desk in the dark and gloom
Henry laments his vehicle's doom.
His sad gaze wanders to his draftsman's tools
And his books and compasses and rules,
And he mournfully shelves friend Cicero;
And then on his accordion wailing low--
The old tune he has so often played--
Henry plays softly "The White Cockade".
On the Vehicle the sun has set;
Still--light and life lie before him yet--
And "The White Cockade" swells out once more,
And once more Henry's ambitions soar
--Whither, is more than Henry knows--
But he rises, and to his desk he goes,
Wondering, with step uncertain and slow,
And musing up at Cicero;
Pencil in hand, his inspiration grows,
Till forth on the page his Philosophy flows:
And in poetry, keen and swift and bold,
His thought, his world, himself unfold--
And the folks wonder rapt at his poetry,
And they smile with Henry's Philosophy----
Then the Vehicle comes on a wild bright ride,
And Henry's success fires the countryside--
For the world Receives his poetry
And Henry's new triumph has come to be!

Hail! Hail! Hail! to our Henry's poetry!
Hail! Hail! Hail! to the works of them that see!
Hail! Hail! Hail! to his Philosophy!
In triumph
Comes Henry
In his homemade vehicle!

!My wife had a cow.
My wife had a cow.
My wife had a cow.
This is the forest primeval,
My wife had a cow.
If some poets were only beneath it,
My wife had a cow.
Gloria in excelsis, no end,
(My wife had a cow)?

That's poetry, Henry--you and I
Have watched our golden age go by.
You drowse on your white porch on the hill

And look down across on the old town still,
And the mist on the blue hills far away
Leads you away to another day:
You contemplate what you have done,
As with thoughtful brow you muse in the sun--
Of the Vehicle and poetry,
And things that have happened to you and me.
And the old town dreams along the hill,
O'er the fragrant fields chirp the crickets shrill,
Swallows ride on the lazy breeze,
And the flowers nod to the hum of the bees.
In simple quiet the old town lies
Under New England's summer skies.
The wagon creaking with its load,
The rattle of old Fords down the road,
The mower's clack in the sweet new hay,
The farmer's chores pass the day away.
Far away in the summer sun
You gaze on life, for your part is done.
Saturday eve your accordion's sound
In the parsonage gathers the folks around,
And "The White Cockade" is heard once more,
And the old tunes flow from your memory's store;
And you smile as they dance to your music's call,
Happy and revered and loved by all.

---The light glares down on Cicero,
And I fret at the words that I do not know.
Bent o'er the desk, I calculate
(His rebus gestis for the state)
But cannot solve, though oft have tried;
(The wind howls dark and cold outside).
Cicero, to hell with you!
Thunderbox, tell me something new--
To "The White Cockade" my weary mind
As the old tune reels through the wooden slats
Unwittingly leaves my Woes behind.
I wander back to a summer day,
To the sun on the green hills far away.
Henry, I see you live and strive,
Henry, I ride in your front wheel drive--
Together we ride through our old town
Into the west as the sun goes down--
Together, Henry, you and I
Watch our golden age go by--
--PROGRESS blares, and My Baby's Eyes
Have taken me, Henry, by surprise!
Tell me, Henry, --there clangs the bell;
My friend, in silence then,---farewell!

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