



THE big-wheeled rig whose head-light
Cuts light from darkness clean,
Blows long at every red light,
And drives when lights show green
The long, grey plain-lands meet her
With scornful nonchalance,
And nothing built can beat her
That ever has the chance.
Across the silent levels
By day and night she reels,
As though a horde of devils
Were howling at her heels.
Hers is the speed and glory—
The glitter and the praise—
Ours is a duller story
Who work the mountain ways.

*Who work the lonely ranges
(Oh! hear the short curves squeal)
With groaning rods and flanges,
Where steel meets stubborn steel—
Who scarcely know what change is,
And yet have hearts to feel.*

The sullen mountains wonder
What shakes their hoary walls,
And when the tunnels thunder
And strident whistle calls,
The hill-gales swoop to wreck us,
The echoes shout "Begone!"
But never wind can check us
Who tramp and blunder on.
With belching funnel thrashing
The blackened bricks and lime,
And golden head light flashing
Against the cliffs we climb;

Up, toiling up, untiring,
With shovel all a-clang,
For everlasting firing
To give her steam to hang.

*We'll lift our load of cattle
And take it down again,
With couplings swung to rattle,
And buffers on the strain,
Then back she'll heave and battle,
And so from plain to plain.*

The racer's bogie chatters,
And tells her driver lies,
The mountain engine scatters
Her soot-grits in his eyes;
And neither imp nor devil
Would ever dare deride
When she is holding revel
Along the mountain side,
With angry funnel running,
With scarlet flaming light,
And smoke shot skyward stunning
The very soul of Night.
But spite of reek above us,
We are not mountain gnomes,
We toil for hearts that love us—
As men should—for their homes.

*With sweat streams on our faces,
And cinders in our eyes,
We check her when she races
(She curses engine-wise),
We drive at easy places,
And nurse her round a rise.*