

Following are a series of poems taken from Chapter 7 of the book “Lake Minnewaska – In the Heart of the Shawangunks” by William E. Doughty.



There is something so inspiring about the grandeur, beauty and charm of Minnewaska it is no wonder that guests have been moved to express their thoughts and emotions in rhythmic patterns.

Volumes could no doubt be filled with poetry written here or called forth by experiences within its rock-curtained solitudes.

Some of these poems we're the creations of lovely people who have long since left this earth and their voices are no longer heard. Others perhaps were never seen or heard except by those nearest and dearest to the writers. Would that all the poems of all the years since 1879 could be assembled and preserved!

Although it is not possible to recapture all this volume of song, it is fortunate that some of the poems written by Minnewaskans have been preserved. In this all too brief recital it has seemed best to reproduce here only poems written by guests known to the author of this book in the all too few years he has shared the rich and beautiful life of Minnewaska. Some of these songs are gay, some are whimsical, some just fun, most of them in chaste literary style, others without benefit of perfect form and matter but all of them genuine expressions which have welled up out of the deeps of human experience and so are worthy of a place among the songs of Minnewaska.

First we quote two poems by *Helen Peck Young*. The first one will strike a responsive chord in the hearts of all who in stormy weather have witnessed the sudden transformation from impenetrable clouds and mist to brilliant sunshine. If any guest who reads this has happened to be here during a long rainy spell or when all the mountaintop is covered with clouds, the description will be very realistic.

WEATHER REPORT AT MINNEWASKA

The Weather Man's a joker;
Today he played a trick.
I think he wore a chef's cap-
To make Pea Soup so thick!

And then while we were shiv'ring,
He turned around to bake
And serve, upon the selfsame day,
A golden Sunshine Cake!

The second poem conveys what to her is the deeper meaning of Minnewaska.

THE HOARDER

I'm heaping up a store of sweets
For use in frugal days:
A pocketful of summer stars,
A warbler's hymn of praise,
A flask of choicest woodland scent,
A sheaf of golden rays.
I'm heaping up a store of sweets
For use in frugal days.

I'm salting down a jar of strength
For months of toil ahead.
From upward thrust of azure peaks
And steadfast rocks widespread.
From constancy of mountain springs
I gather more than bread!
I'm salting down a jar of strength
For months of toil ahead.

I'm lifting up a cup of faith
For Thee, dear Lord, to fill.
From pools of peace and quietness
Let drops of mercy spill
Upon a world athirst for power
And quench hate with good will,
I'm lifting up a cup of faith
For Thee, dear Lord, to fill.

One day a guest heard someone remark that Minnewaska belongs only to those who are worthy of her. The result was the following poem by *Marquerite Weed*.

MAKE US WORTHY

Beauty has shed its blessing on this place;
And melody has filled each song of bird
With music sweeter far than any word
Of human speech. There is unending grace
In bending trees reflected on the face
Of blue, unfathomed waters, calm or stirred
By gentle breeze whose sound is but half heard
Beneath skies veiled by clouds like filmy lace.

There is rest here for weary heart and mind;
Balm for the tired body and worn soul;
Peace, that like perfect love can cast out fear;
And he who truly seeks shall ever find
The answer to his need to be made whole—
God make, us worthy of His bounty here.

Many guests have found new strength and courage on these mountains. One of them, *Mrs. Robert E. Holland*, expresses this for many others as well as for herself in the following poem.

SANCTUARY

I sat alone on a mountain-top
And God came down to me,
I felt His presence everywhere
In flower, sky and tree;
The lake below, quiet, serene—
The towering cliffs above
Brought close to me as ne'er before
His words of faith and love.

I must return to my tasks at home
For life moves on that way
But something great goes back with me
To help me face each day:
I heard His voice and this He said,
"Whoever seeks shall find."
Words that bring courage, strength and peace
To body, soul and mind.

The silence of mist-capped mountains,
Or the peace of a ruby lake.
Yet God surely heard the anthems
Weak though men's voices are,
For He hung out a lantern in heaven,
His burnished-gold evening star.

Jean Walker, for two years hostess at Wildmere, has published a number of her poems in a volume entitled "Weldings." From this we quote one poem which is especially called to the attention of those who find rainy days hard to bear during their all-too-short sojourn in the mountains, when they wish every day could be full of sunshine for enjoyment in the out of doors.

I LOVE THE RAIN

I love the rain, and too
Its challenge to be gay,
There shines for me a sun within
I am not slave to weather's grey.

I love the rain, and too
Its lilting, springtime song;
Rain paints the earth in wondrous greens
To comfort when the drought is long.

Oh, love the rain, all you
Who have the gift to see,
And let it baptize you anew
And cause you to more joyous be.

Love you the rain?

Her poem, "*A Prayer*," which appears on the back of the picture at the beginning of Chapter 2 [*a picture of Alfred Smiley*], is, it would seem, a fitting expression of what must have been in the hearts and prayers of the founding fathers and must ever continue to be our prayer as generations pass.

One more poem by *Jean Walker* is included because of its fine imagination and understanding and because it was inspired by Minnewaska.

CAPTURED

There is a moment in the life of man
Who climbs the hills
To scan the works of God-

When time is lost,
When he becomes the rock,
The tallest tree,
The ripple on the lake,
The tumbling waterfall;
And in that one rare flash
The riddle of the universe
Is glimpsed or solved;
Eternity walks by his side
And he with surer faith
Descends to run his course.

A poem by one of the ministers who has shared in the religious services here is included in our anthology of Minnewaska verse. It is by *Dr. P. H. J. Lerrigo*.

MINNEWASKA'S SILENCES

(To "The Lady of the Lake")

Mrs. Fletcher Smiley

God made among the hills a lovely spot
For all His varient silences to dwell:
The sibilant, soft hush of Palmaghatt,
Point Castle's wind-swept silence, and the spell
Of silvery stillness in the moon-crowned night,
The whispered murmur of the valley rill,

The hush of heated noontide's drowsy light,
The vast, impassive silence of the hill,
The stilled expectancy of coming dawn,
The mauve and coral calm of sunset glow,
The mutely sparkling dewdrop on the lawn,
The silent wavelets' scintillating flow.

And thus God's varied silences combined
In vocal paradox of silent speech,
With all their unsung harmonies entwined,
Into my hushed and list'ning heart to, reach.

Miss Jean Carter Cochran, who, both because of her long association with Minnewaska and because of the high quality of her poetry, deserves to be called the "*Poet Laureate of Minnewaska*."

The first of her poems we will quote is a whimsical but poignant record of how a little fern from Minnewaska, cherished in her home during the intervals between Minnewaska visits, met with a chilly reception from one who did not understand.

ROCK FERN

You had no merit in her scornful eyes
As you grew inside my window.
She said "No club would give your fern a prize."
Then used you for an ash tray.
Of course she could not see
The road beside the lake
Which birch trees shade
Nor hear the minstrelsy
Of leaves and sighing pines:
The rock you carpeted she never knew
With its deep starry moss,
In which your tiny rootlets clung and grew
So warm in wind or sleet,
Nor had she heard the tender little word
That only you and I and summer heard.

On one of the birthdays of *Mr. George Smiley*, *Miss Cochran* wrote a poem in his honor. We are happy to pass it on as it expresses what all who knew *Mr. Smiley* felt about him.

WE SALUTE YOU

This is your day, dear friend, and we would bring
Our love and friendship as our offering,
Because your life is spent in kindly deed
And thought of others, never your own need;
To tired toilers you have brought sweet rest,
Beauty and peace. You give us of your best,
That we might turn to God on hill or trail
And find through Him a strength that must avail
In health or illness, storm or stress, or strife,
And through our striving find abundant life.
You have indeed fulfilled God's dearest plan;
We find in you a Christian nobleman.

The last poems we will quote are two exquisite sonnets by *Miss Cochran*.

EVENING AT MINNEWASKA

How gently twilight falls upon our lake,
A sapphire set upon the mountain's brow
No white lipped ripples on her grey cliffs break
But in her azure mirror even now
Both earth and heaven closely intertwine
Reflecting fleets of clouds which standing by
Await a breeze, or watch-word, or a sign
To weigh their anchor for the western sky.

The hermit thrush which sang to us all day,
Is silent, too, within the gallant pine,
A soldier listening for the reveille,
Or sentinel who waits a countersign.
Should birches sway or murmur by the strand
His awed expectancy bids them be still,
That lake and cliff, dim glade and forest land
May hear God speak above the sunset hill.

AN INTERPRETER

If all my days my dearest dream shall be
To share with men the lure of sea or star,
So that my joyance makes their blind eyes see
A glimpse of Heaven o'er the sunset bar;
If finding God in some fine harmony,
My rapture stirs their deafened ear to hear,
And, hearing, know the same deep ecstasy,
Sensing His presence who is always near;
If men shall feel the sweep of angels' wings,
Touch them a moment through some word of mine,
And at the sudden stir of holy things,
Turn to obey His inner voice Divine
Let no man praise me, for no praise he seeks
Who is the instrument through which God speaks.

So we conclude our song recital, but this is not the end of the songs which we are certain will continue to rise from gifted minds and hearts in this enchanted realm where sometimes "great mists lie" but always where "great dreams rise."

AFTER SUNSET

I have an understanding with the hills

At evening, when the slanted radiance fills
Their hollows, and the great winds let them be,
And they are quiet and look down at me.
Oh, then I see the patience in their eyes
Out of the centuries that made them wise.
They lend me hoarded memory, and I learn
Their thoughts of granite and their whims of fern,
And why a dream of forests must endure
Though every tree be slain; and how the pure,
Invisible beauty has a word so brief
A flower can say it, or a shaken leaf,
But few may ever snare it in a song,
Though for the quest a life is not too long.
When the blue hills grow tender, when they pull
The twilight close with gesture beautiful,
And shadows are their garments, and the air
Deepens, and the wild veery is at prayer,
Their arms are strong around me; and I know
That somehow I shall follow where you go
To the still land beyond the evening star,
Where everlasting hills and valleys are,
And silence may not hurt us any more,
And terror shall be past, and grief and war.

-Grace Hazard Conkling