

The House by the Side of the Road

An Introduction by Nat M. Washer, San Antonio

To give expression to ideals one must of necessity have felt the need of such ideals and suffered by reason of their lack. To write such a poem as this the author must have been brought into contact with human suffering—not for bread so much as for sympathy—to have visualized the heart bruised and broken by “man’s inhumanity to man.”

To “live in a house by the side of the road and be friend to man” is but to typify the ninth clause of the Decalogue, to glorify the Sermon on the Mount, to exemplify the Golden Rule, and generally to applaud and to practice the underlying philosophy of every religion, in all of which is found the sublime injunction, “Love thy neighbor as thyself.”

THE HOUSE BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD.

By Sam Walter Foss (1858-1911)

There are hermit souls that live withdrawn
In the place of their self-content;
There are souls like stars, that dwell apart,
In a fellowless firmament;
There are pioneer souls that blaze their paths
Where highways never ran—
But let me live by the side of the road
And be friend to man.

Let me live in a house by the side of the road
Where the race of men go by—
The men who are good and the men who are bad,
As good and as bad as I.
I will not sit in the scorner’s seat
Or hurl the cynic’s ban—
Let me live in a house by the side of the road
And be a friend to man

I see from my house by the side of the road,
By the side of the highway of life,
The men who press on with the ardor of hope,
The men who are faint with the strife,
But I do not turn away from their smiles or their tears,
Both part of an infinite plan—
Let me live in a house by the side of the road
And be a friend to man

I know there are brook-gladdened meadows ahead,
And mountains of wearisome height;
And the road passes on through the long afternoon
And stretches away to the night.
And still I rejoice when the travelers rejoice
And weep with the strangers that moan,
Nor live in my house by the side of the road
Like a man who dwells alone.

Let me live in my house by the side of the road,
It's here the race of men go by—
They are good, they are bad, they are weak, they are strong,
Wise, foolish—so am I.
Then why should I sit in the scorner's seat,
Or hurl the cynic's ban?
Let me live in my house by the side of the road
And be a friend to man.