

**THE OPEN SPACES:
INCIDENTS OF
NIGHTS AND DAYS
UNDER THE BLUE SKY**

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The Open Spaces: Incidents of Nights and Days Under the Blue Sky by John C. van Dyke

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JOHN C. VAN DYKE

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BOOKS BY PROF. JOHN C. VAN DYKE

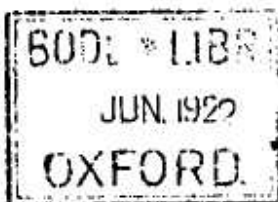
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THE OPEN SPACES



View a photograph by Mrs. Edward A. Ayer

The Mohave Desert



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PREFACE—DEDICATION

TO

MURIEL MOORE

A SCHOOLBOY, with shining morning face, creeping unwillingly to school, vainly striving to repeat declensions, fretted by the prospect of the day's confinement, and high overhead the honk of wild geese from the upper sky to fire his eye and set his fancy flying. Against the blue of spring, with broad wings beating back the southern breeze, the clamoring wedge was moving north by west. How strong the wings! How sure the flight! How keen the homing sense guiding through that vast expanse of air and sky! Where away was the gray leader calling them? Was the long course set for the prairie pools and linked waterways of Minnesota or the unknown lakes of British America? And what a lure in that far cry, sounding clarion-like from the sky-space, calling down to the boy in the city street:

“Follow! Oh, follow!
Follow by stream and hollow!
Follow to No Man's Land!”

A boy's will is the wind's will, and the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts. But the boy's

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thought then seemed merely a fancy—a dream of traversing the unknown wilderness, of canoeing with trappers through wild-rice lakes and down strange rivers, of riding with Indians and shooting big game on the prairies. The colored map of his school geography was vague beyond the line of the Mississippi. Back from the river there was a huge tract marked "Unexplored." That was the outermost rim of discovery. How should he ever follow the flock into that land of far horizons?

But, strange to say, the day-dreams of the boy became realities. Sooner than he could imagine they came to pass—came true. As a boy he was taken to the great Northwest; he followed in canoes the far waterways of the wild geese, he hunted the forests, rode the plains, and slept by the prairie pool. Again and again, through boyhood and manhood, he came and went in the mountains, the Bad Lands, the buffalo ranges, the deserts. The wind's will was scarcely more free than the boy's will and the man's will.

Alas! for the changes brought in by civilization! The prairie has been ribbed by the plough, the forest has fallen before the axe, the waterways have become turbid with commerce, even the deserts have been invaded, and the borderland has slowly slipped back to the inaccessible

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barrens of the north or the bare ranges of the south. Yet the whilom schoolboy still sees that wilderness of his youth—sees it as clearly as he hears the long-ago honk of the gray leader calling from the blue sky of spring. The love and the lure of the wild have remained with him, and now, after many years, he is writing for you some happenings of those early days—living over again in memory the wonder of his lost youth.

The record is not wholly of early years nor is it chronological or consecutive, for many of the incidents and observations occurred during latter-day revisitings. But linked together these happenings form a trail—my own trail in the open. The country through which it leads has become more or less familiar to so many that I need not describe it; but the life that it once knew has largely disappeared, and it is that I would conjure up for you. Therefore will you retrace with me the now dim pathway? Will you follow, follow, by stream and hollow, follow to No Man's Land?

JOHN C. VAN DYKE.

RUTGERS COLLEGE, 1922.