

**SUNFLOWERS: A
BOOK OF
KANSAS POEMS**

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Sunflowers: A Book of Kansas Poems by Willard Wattles & Ivan Schuler

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WILLARD WATTLES & IVAN SCHULER

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SUNFLOWERS

A Book of Kansas Poems



Collected by

WILLARD WATTLES

*Illustrations
by*

IVAN SCHULER

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LAWRENCE, KANSAS

1914

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Kansas

BY THOMAS EMMET DEWEY

*Not for what she hath done for me,
Though it be great,
For what she is, her majesty,
I love my State.*

This Book For Sale

by

WILLARD WATTLES
LAWRENCE, KANSAS

Price, One Dollar, in Lawrence

Ten Cents Extra for Postage

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, and to Mitchell Kennerley of New York City for permission to use Lindsay's *Kansas* from *The Forum* and from *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty*. To *Smart Set* for Harry Kemp's *Kansas and London*, and for my poem, *Manhood*. To *Harper's Weekly* for my *Sunflowers*.

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W. W.

PREFACE

To the people of Kansas I dedicate the labor of five years; not mine alone, but that of a group of friends who have equally given of their time to this little volume. At first, my only intention was to collect the lyric verse of living Kansas writers; but as the conception grew, it seemed possible to include the work of earlier men and women who had sensed the significance of our state;—and the relatives of those early authors have added their assistance to that of my other friends.

Yet, in no way is this collection to be regarded as a complete anthology of Kansas verse. My earlier intention has restricted my choice to such poems as seem to be especially interpretative of the state, in the way Miss Esther M. Clark's "Call of Kansas" is interpretative. I have, for that reason omitted some of our finest Kansas poetry, such as Eugene F. Ware's famous "Washerwoman's Song," for others of his poems which are especially local in their appeal. Believing that provincialism is as much of an essential in literature as it is a bane in morality, I have chosen those poems that smack unmistakably of our Kansas soil and are close to the grass-roots. It will be the task of some other laborer, when our literature shall have been more completely written, to garner in future harvest-fields the richest of our grain.

That day I believe will come. Much more has already been done than many of us realize. A host of devoted men and women, among them Richard Realf, Ellen Allerton, and Amanda T. Jones, not forgetting that New England champion of our early liberties, John G. Whittier, has already set the name of Kansas in "song and oratory." I need not mention the names of Paine, Ingalls, Mason, Ware, White, Howe, Morgan, Harger, McCarter, and Carruth.

Are these all? There is even now a younger group, and among them, Harry Kemp, Esther M. Clark, Margaret Lynn, and C. L. Edson, now of the New York Evening Mail. What they are doing is known beyond the barb wire fences of our state. Another Westerner, though not a native, has interpreted the message and significance of Kansas, and is already acknowledged as a vital minister of the Gospel of Beauty and Democracy. To Mr. Nicholas Vachel Lindsay are due the thanks of the State of Kansas as well as the thanks of America for his even broader service. After Walt Whitman,—Harry Kemp, Lind-

say, and Witter Bynner, may be looked to as the staunchest servants of an Ideal Commonwealth among the poets of America. It has been my privilege to know the three now living, and through John Burroughs to know the master of them all. Except for the encouragement of such men, and of William Herbert Carruth, I doubt if this collection would have been possible.

To three friends I owe a special debt. In 1911, Harry Kemp was one of a group of six at the University of Kansas to publish a volume called "Songs from the Hill." At that time in our pardonable enthusiasm, we argued that, since the centers of American literature had moved in the past from New York in the days of Irving and Cooper to New England in the days of Hawthorne and Emerson; thence in a later day to Indiana and Chicago; overlooking the fact that California has developed a literature of her own, that the next logical camping place of the muses should be on the banks of the "Kaw," as we euphoniously christen our muddy Kansas river. After living for three years in New England, I am not so certain that we were entirely wrong. "If that be treason, make the most of it." Certainly, I shall feel that this little book is in some way the fulfillment of that enthusiastic vision of Harry Kemp.

Two years ago, while Kemp was at Helmetta, New Jersey, he wrote at my request a poem "Kansas" which I print in this volume as the feature poem. The poem is already known to the state through the newspapers, but I have the privilege of giving it the first permanent publication. I received yesterday from New York the following telegram from Kemp in regard to the poem: "Yes, I wrote it for you."

Without the aid of Miss Esther M. Clark this book could not have been prepared. She has written letters, prepared my copy, and read my proof. I cannot sufficiently thank her. I can do it best in verse.

To Ivan Shuler, my friend and schoolmate, I am indebted for the drawings on which he spent three years of patient labor. He, like myself, was reared on a Kansas farm; and is peculiarly fitted by that inheritance as well as by his training in the art institutes of Chicago and New York, to interpret the spirit of Kansas. It is my highest hope that this book will bring him the recognition he deserves. Julian Street has said in Collier's Weekly that Kansas has little or no original Kansas art,—and Julian Street is more or less right. Julian Street is a journalist and his business is to report facts as he finds them. But if I may play the prophet as he the reporter, I would

answer all critics of a raw and crude civilization such as is unquestionably ours in aesthetic matters, in the words of Harry Kemp:

*"Let other countries glory in their Past,
But Kansas glories in her days to be."*

But now to the people of Kansas I must say, "That depends on us,"—on every Kansan whose duty it is to support the cultural and educative institutions of his state, to bring to the consideration of public questions a mind unswayed by provincialism or fanaticism, with the simultaneous obligation of not forgetting, when that culture shall have been attained, that the source of strength and beauty alike is in the soil from which we spring. Whenever a culture goes to seed at the top, it becomes a menace to society; and if the choice were given me of seeing in Kansas what I have seen of culture in another section of America,—and I do not mean New England,—I should shatter the Decalogue by my way of saying, "Culture be hanged—give me the prairie-dogs."

And here I wish to explain that whatever I have said in my own verse in contrasting the East with the West is not leveled at the *people* of the East; for my three years in Amherst, Massachusetts, were three of the happiest and most valuable of my life. In many ways the East is kinder than the West. What I do object to in the East is the *mental provincialism* of her people which is as marked as the *aesthetic provincialism* of the West—that sort of attitude on the part of the average Easterner which makes him look upon the Hudson river as the western boundary of the habitable globe. Fortunately, that attitude is even now changing toward a broader Americanism. There is none of us who need not be reminded that "there is neither East nor West," and that men are not citizens of Kansas or of Manhattan only, but citizens of America, and after that citizens of the world. Not in one generation alone has the query risen, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?"

This book goes from me to the people of Kansas. It is no longer my property. There is on it no copyright. I shall feel fortunate if I sell enough of these copies to pay my printer, and he is a very good printer, an editor and my friend—Mr. W. C. Simons and Mr. J. L. Brady, for there are two of "him." They, too, have made this collection possible, because they believe in me and in the people of Kansas. These are your poets and your poems. What will you do with them?

WILLARD WATTLES.

Lawrence, Kansas,
October 18, 1914.