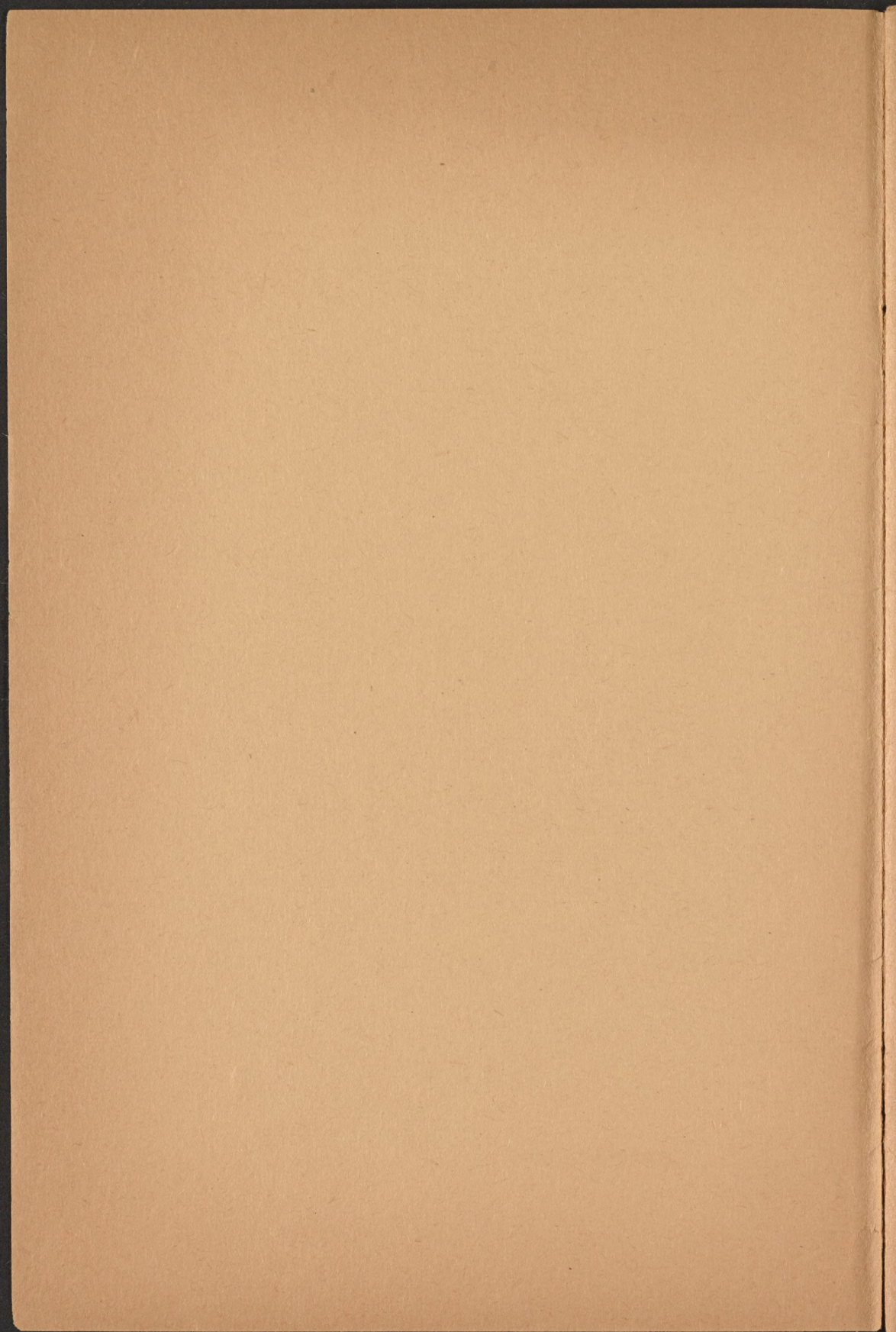


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Cactus
Blossoms





Cactus Blossoms

1945

Poems by:

*Students of
Butte High School,
Gila Relocation Center,
Rivers, Arizona*

Illustrations by:

Shizuko Nakamura

INTRODUCTION

It is a pleasure to write an introduction to these poems from young Americans in one of our Relocation Centers. These young people have gone through soul-tearing experiences and yet they have come out with an essential soundness. These poems describe the struggles through which they have gone. They are straight out of the heart of Life and they speak to Life. They have the quality of reality in them and many of them will live.

In many ways, these Americans of Japanese ancestry have been one of the finest groups in American Life. They have had a higher percentage of young people in college than any other racial group, a lower percentage involved in crime and almost no one on relief during the depression. They have more young men in the American Army than any other racial group, nearly 12,000. They have been cited for bravery in Italy, have now over 1,000 Purple Hearts, 46 Silver Stars, 31 Bronze Stars, 9 Distinguished Service Crosses and the Distinguished Unit Citation and 3 Legion Merit Medals.

America should be proud of these Loyal Americans who have shown their Loyalty in deeds, offering the supreme sacrifice on the altar of that Loyalty. Yet these Americans have been held without charge and without trial for two years and not allowed the freedom which other American citizens have. Our discrimination against them should be ended.

Lt. Tanahashi was killed in action in Italy on July 4, 1944 --- note the date! Shortly before he was killed he wrote: "When this unfinished business is taken care of, we should all be able to live together as good Americans. My fervent hope is that the slant of the heart will determine a man's loyalty." Note -- "the slant of the heart", and not the slant of the eye. It is the heart that counts.

These poems show the slant of the hearts of the young people who wrote them. We should be proud of them. I am.

1944

B. Stanley Jones

BE LIKE THE CACTUS

by
Kimii Nagata

Let not harsh tongues, that wag
in vain,
Discourage you. In spite of
pain,
Be like the cactus, which through
rain,
And storm, and thunder, can
remain.



THE DESERT IS MY HOME

by Tokiko Inouye

The desert is my home;
 I love its sun and sands,
I love its vastness, centurie's sleep;
 It challenges , commands!

At night the cold stars crystallize,
 Opalescent, free;
I exult in their ageless eyes,
 Their silence envelops me.

This desert is my home,
 This, the open plains
And endless sage beneath hot suns,
 The sky and sudden rains.

From golden dawn to red sunset,
 The desert beckons, calls--
I love its freedom wilderness,
 Unlimited by walls.

And this will be my home;
 The desert sands I'll plod,
Far out beneath its skies and stars,
 To be alone with God.



THE BEND IN THE ROAD

by June Moriwaki

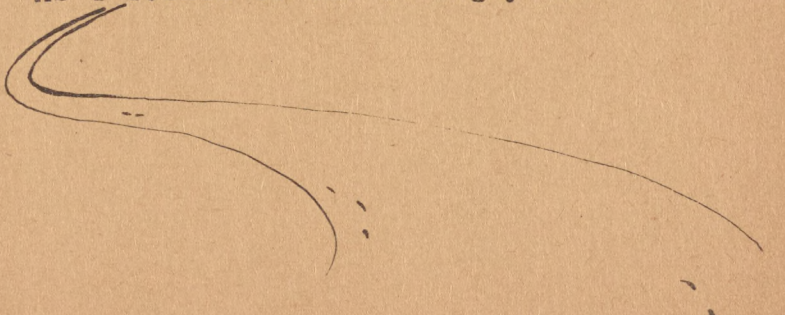
I walked along without changing my pace,
For this road was familiar to me,
With friends beside me, I knew each kind face,
I thought my goal easy to see.

It was a good road and very well laid,
Rocks and debris all removed;
At each bridge I found the toll had been paid,
By some one I cherished and loved.

But there was a bend not far away,
Beyond which conflict would start,
Dad staunch for the land in which he was born
And me for the one in my heart.

Now the road I had known sank out of sight
In the depths of a great ravine;
I groped and stumbled, for there was no light,
Or path as there always had been.

So I discovered the road unlaid,
The road that I had to clear,
Toll for the bridges by me to be paid
As I looked to the coming year.



THE WORLD

by

Jessica Hoshino

Who dares to say the world is
filled
With putrid smells of hell to
come,
The world shall hate, shall
crush, ---
We live, we die, and all is
done?

The Light of the World shall
never cease
To those with heart and
will;
The Life of Love will give us
peace
At last when all is
still.

FAITH

by Oscar Inouye

O God, in all my days
I have experienced not
An act as this-- with deadly rays
To burn bright hopes, ambitions
 sought.
A thunderous storm so mighty that
 it fell
And blew my past to myriad depths
 of hell.

O God, thou knowest all--
On earth that happened here.
The fearful few forced me to fall
Into a damned cell of fear.
I cannot tell what destinies shall
 stand
For future life in this unfriendly
 land.

O God, despite this act
Of hate, injustice, greed,
My stalwart heart I held intact,
Forgiving all, from untruth freed.
Through Christ, I caught some words
 of hope unsold,
"Have faith, have faith in Him"--
 worth priceless gold.

O God, through all these days
My faith was sinewy.
For faith is breath in both its ways--
Exhaling grants my gifts to thee,
Inhaling brings to me celestial grace,
And without both, ill fate my life
 would face.



A PRAYER

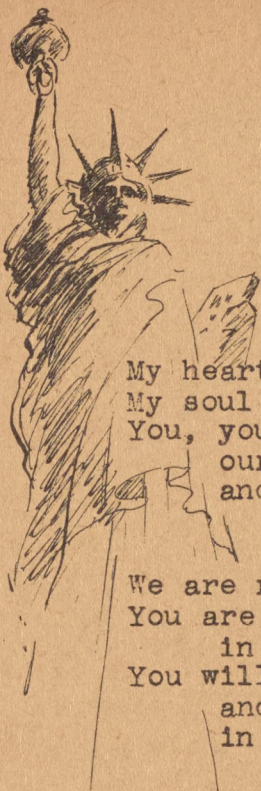
by Bette Shikata

Each night I say a little prayer
For someone far away;
I know He'll watch with loving care-
"Please bring him back someday! "

Each night I say a little prayer
For someone that I miss;
I know he said he really cared
And sealed it with a kiss.

Each night I say a little prayer
For someone who has gone;
I long to see his smiling face-
Will I, when war is done?





FAITH

by Yukio Ota

My heart is proud,
My soul is glorious and free.
You, young Nisei, are fighting for
our lives, our country, future,
and everything we stand for.

We are right behind you.
You are proving that we are loyal
in Italy and wherever you go.
You will come back victorious and free,
and we will be waiting for you
in this land of liberty.

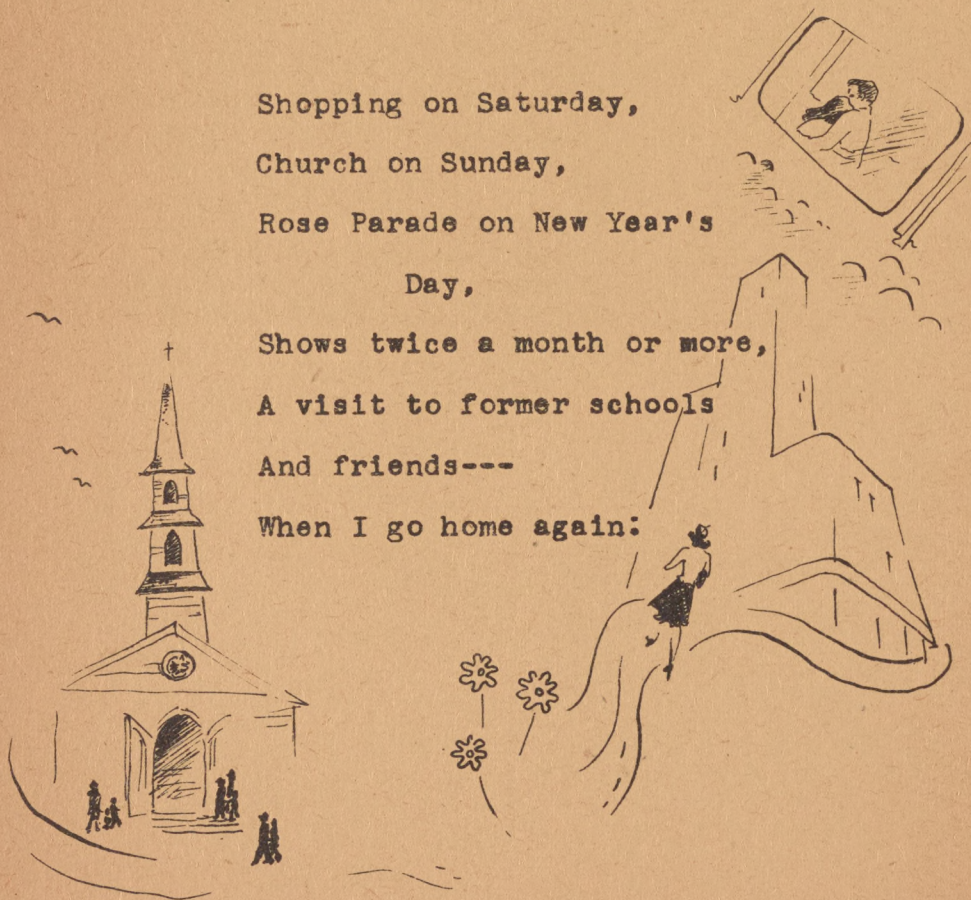


HOME AGAIN
by
Fusako Yamaoka

When I go home again,
I hope that everything
will be the same.

Shopping on Saturday,
Church on Sunday,
Rose Parade on New Year's
Day,

Shows twice a month or more,
A visit to former schools
And friends---
When I go home again:



CLOUDS

by Ben Mura

I stand and watch the clouds sail by
Across the land of sage and sand.
Up near the roof of spacious sky---
The clouds float over mesas grand.

I breathe a sigh that it were I---
That drift beyond the western steep,
Where poppies bloom with blossoms high,
Where sea gulls play with waves so deep.

I wish I were a cloud now floating by,
Where cacti stand and shadows lie---.



A monument built on a hilltop nearby honors five-hundred-seventy-four youths who left their relatives in this camp when they volunteered for service in the armed forces of the United States. Eight of the number have gold stars by their names, for they have paid the supreme sacrifice upon the battlefield in Italy. The spirit of those men, living and dead, inspires the deepest emotion in the hearts of the Japanese-Americans and is proof incarnate of their loyalty to America.

Mabel Sheldon

Teacher at the
Gila Relocation Center

MEMORIAL
by Nobuko Emoto

Memorial
On a hilltop
Alone, silent....

A grave
Of our dreams
Blasted, shattered?

A grave
Of our hopes
Rising in smoke?

A grave
For our souls
Withered in retreat?

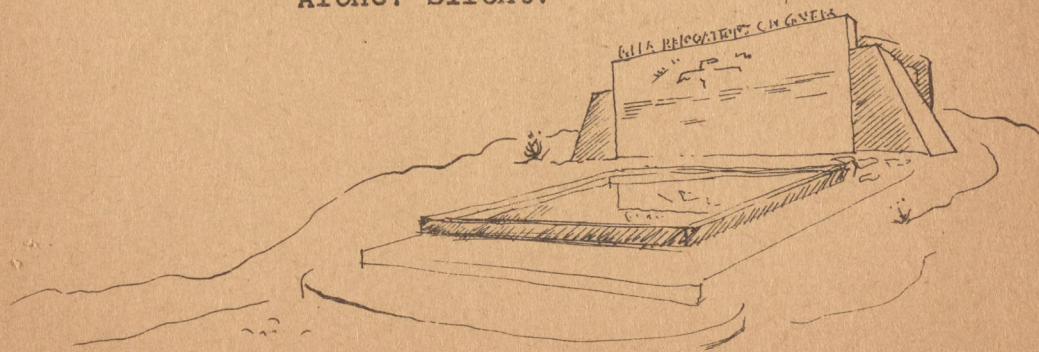
A symbol
Of a faith
Which cannot die!

A symbol
Of our blood
Flowing in Italy.

A symbol
Of the future
Unconquered, unbowed.

A symbol
Surrounded by
Spirits of our dead.

Memorial
On a hilltop
Alone? Silent?



WHERE IS LOVE?

by
Midori Wada

O Love, where have you gone to
 stay awhile?
Is it some far off place beyond
 our reach?
Come back! The world needs you
 and your sweet smile,
Friendship, love and fellowship
 to teach.

How I long to see this world
 of ours
United in one friendship, never
 to part.
May that day come, with joy and
 peaceful hours,
When birds, instead of shells,
 shall skyward dart.



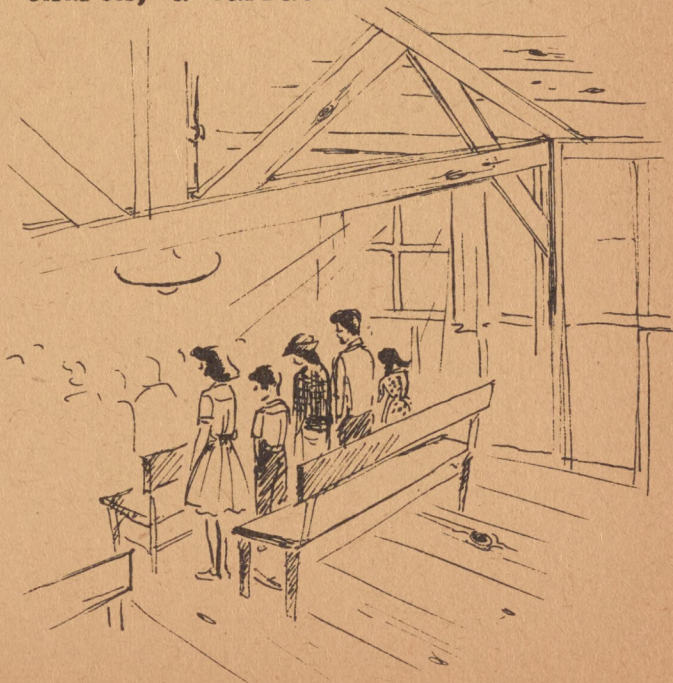
MY CHURCH

by
Tokiko Inouye

My church is not of marble,
 With damask hangings rare;
It has no rich warm carpet
 On which to kneel in prayer;
Nor has it deep-toned organ,
 But it's God's house, He is there.

Our windows are not spacious
 Or made of gold-stained glass,
But they keep out the noises
 And let the sunlight pass.

And now each Sunday morning
 When we seek God through our gloom,
We see Him much more closely
 In our church, a barrack room.



IT ALWAYS COMES

by
Kimii Nagata

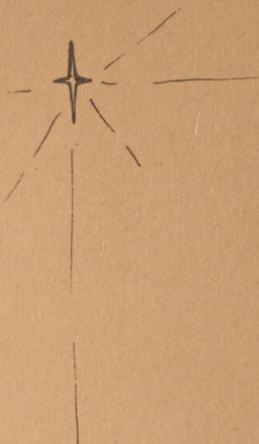
It may not come with shouts of joy,
With merry sleigh-bells ringing;
It may not come with lots of toys,
But Christmas always comes!

Let not misfortune bind you strong
Though loved ones you have lost.
Let barrack rafters ring with song,
For, Christmas always comes.

May every girl and every boy,
May young and old alike,
O'erflow with thankfulness and joy
That Christmas always comes.

If it may seem to you this year
That there's no Brightest Star,
Have trust, have faith in Him, sincere,
Then, Christmas always comes.





OUR GIFT

by
Lois Kaneoka

The white stars scintillate the truth
While bands of angels sing,
For on this holy night was born
Our Christ in Bethlehem.

A hundred score of years have passed
Since He came from above
But to the Cross of Christ we bear
These gifts- faith, hope and love.



Tangibles are tinsel leaves
That fall and turn to dust;
Virtuous lives are golden bars
That shine and never rust.



DEATH, WHERE IS THY VICTORY

by
Nebuko Emoto

Death, laugh...

Aye, you crushed the bud
before it blossomed,
You took from this world
a blessed child of God...

A child of God...

A dreamer at five, whose
cup was overflowing,
Who spoke with angels, with
Christ, with God...

Who spoke with God...

Though his body was robbed
of strength and flesh,
Though he lay on his back,
helpless as a leaf...

As a leaf in waters...

Tossed about by raging waves
of fever,
Grasped and sucked into
whirlpools of delirium.



[Handwritten signature]

Aye, Death, laugh...

You robbed a father of man's
greatest treasure,
A mother of her dearest
possession...their son.

A son, beloved...

At whose passing great men,
simple men, wept,
And winds sobbed, skies
darkened, hearts broke...

His parents' hearts...

But would he want a treasure
when the babe would suffer,
Or she spare her tears that the
babe's should flow?


Aye, you robbed...

But you lost to God. Remember,
Death, Job's words:

"The Lord gave and the Lord
hath taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Ah, Death, where is thy victory?



THE DESERT QUEEN



by
Tokiko Inouye

Softly she rose from her dove-gray throne,
And rising, sighed a languorous sigh.
She raised her soft and youthful arms,
Embraced the stars and kissed the sky.

Then she smiled a radiant smile
At her people, the sage and sands,
And to her court, the stars, she gave
Her graceful, golden hands.

She beckoned then her zephyr bards
To bring forth their harps and play
While she strolled the silvery, star-made path,
The jeweled milky way.

And so the stars and clouds stood still;
Soft music, faintly, light,
Filled the star-decked, prairie skies
While she reigned, Queen of Night.



MY PLEA

by Mary Matsuzawa

Oh God, I pray that I may bear a cross
To set my people free,
That I may help to take good-will across
An understanding sea.

Oh God, I pray that someday every race
May stand on equal plane
And prejudice will find no dwelling place
In a peace that all may gain.



FOUND

by
Frances
Yanaginuma


Once lost in the arms of the
wilderness

We looked toward God above;
He gently spread His holy light,
And with it all, His love.




THE DESERT

by Tokiko Inouye

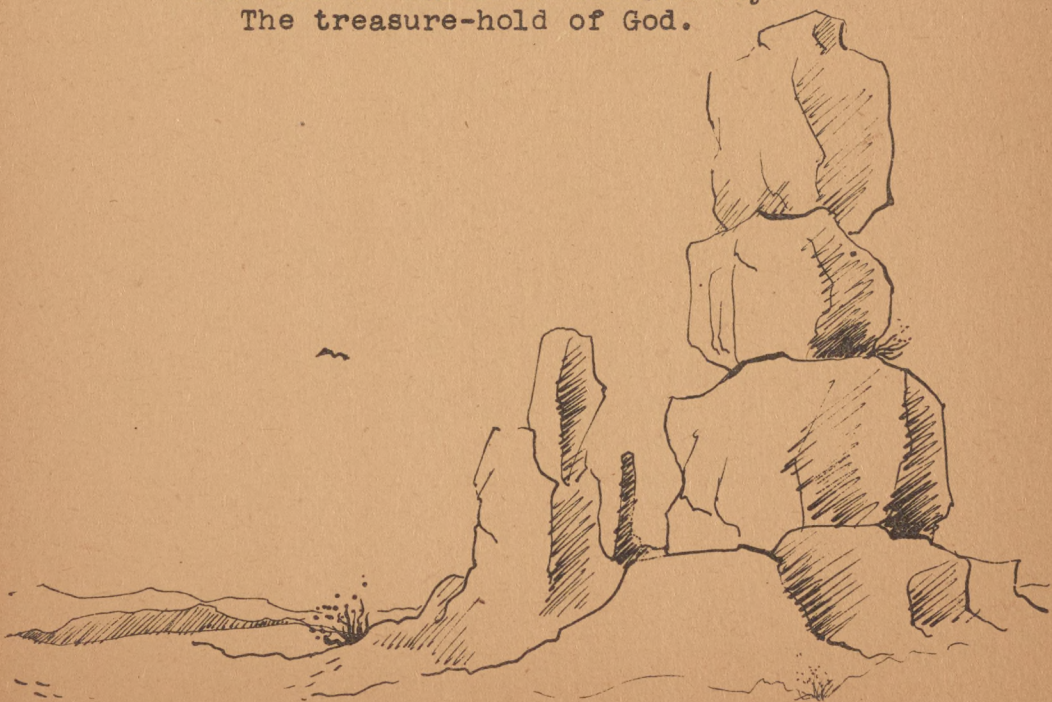


Home of the cactus, land of the sun,
And the prairie dog's lonely cry;
The path of the builders, The cow-boy's trail,
And the blue of the desert sky.



The barren wilderness, endless plains,
Purple mountains to the west;
Where forgotten crawling creatures roam
And coyotes take their rest.

Vast and lonely, age-old sands
For centuries lost, untrod;
Yet with a wealth of sun and sky--
The treasure-hold of God.



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