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# The Careless Smoker

Harris A. Reynolds

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# The Careless Smoker

(Apologies to Kipling)

A fool there was and his pipe he lit  
    (Even as you and I)  
On a forest trail where the leaves were fit  
To become ablaze from the smallest bit  
Of spark—and the fool he furnished it  
    The day was windy and dry.

The forest was burned to its very roots,  
    Even beneath the ground,  
With the flowers, the birds and the poor dumb brutes,  
Old hoary oaks, and the tender shoots  
Which might have made logs but for such galoots  
    Allowed to wander round.

The lumber jack has now passed on  
    His pay-day comes no more  
And the screech-owls haunt the camp at dawn  
Where the cook's tin pan woke the men of brawn  
But the mill is silent, the trees are gone,  
    The soil and the forest floor.

A deadly sight are those hills of rocks  
    Which once were beds of green,  
No hope for the human, no food for the flocks  
The floods must be held by expensive locks  
And the harbor is silted to the docks  
    The ships no more are seen.

But the fool smokes on in the forest still  
    Leaves camp-fires burning too  
While the patient public pays the bill  
And the nation's wealth is destroyed for nil  
If the law doesn't get him, Old Satan will  
    When his smoking days are through.

\*By Harris A. Reynolds in "*The Open Road*."