

Sketch

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Morning Ride

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Morning Ride

Roy Kyner

EARTH dust, caked on the oiled leather of the harness, slips beneath my fingers; buckles and links clink and jingle as I toss the harness over Dick's back. He snorts and stamps a hoof on the heavy cypress planks, splintered into a rough fuzz over their surface by many trappings.

Faint dust sifts down from the haymow as beams vibrate, and early sunlight strikes long shafts through the eddying particles.

With long strokes I slick the curry comb along Jerry's side; a horsey odor rises. I harness him, then lead the horses from the barn to the cultivator standing in the farmyard.

I hitch up, and as we start toward the road, a quail calls "bob-white" from some quiet pool of shadow west of the glossy-leaved hedge. For a moment I envy him and forget the jouncing cultivator seat beneath me, until it begins to hit harder as the iron wheels jar over the hard-packed gravel of the road. My backbone slumps limply into a curve; I sway and jerk with the jolts of the cultivator and try to forget the rattles and shakes enveloping me.

CLOVER blooms are redolent beside the road. A tonic breath comes from the pastures, lush and green with June—the hot blast of July will soon darken and dry them. Like June, too, is the morning sun—now it prickles in a warm caress on the back of my neck; at noon it will press upon me with tangible force, or if the day turns cloudy and muggy, an even worse heat will surround me like a giant's breath.

We turn into a lane, soft-cushioned with dust. Clouds puff up around the horses' feet, and cascades of heavier particles course from the sides and bottoms of the wheels as they endlessly turn up out of the dust.

As we go beside the corn cultivated yesterday, the six-inch plants stand up out of the dark, beautiful Iowa loam in rows, seeming to

radiate from a hub. As they shift in endless geometrical patterns my eyes get dizzy from the ceaseless, changing design.

We turn into an uncultivated row. The shovels sink easily through the thin top crust, and earth topples in black fountains. The squeak and creak of equipment and the smooth forward push are as a soporific to my thoughts. For the rest of the morning my motions will be automatic, as I drive the team and shift the shovels, while the green rows slip back endlessly between them.



Corn Picking

Kenneth R. Baldus

The air was harsh and dry with winter's cold.
The snow made crackling sounds at every step
As I walked down the rows of ripened corn.
I stopped to rest and leaned against a wheel,
And heard the neighbor picking in his field,
The constant thud of ears against the board,
Methodical as ever-moving time.
A rooster crowed a mile or so away,
Was answered by a pheasant cock close by.
Above, the sky, a frozen, steely blue
Was ready for another fall of snow.
The sun looked weary in its metal cast.
Immutability of nature's law
Seemed crystallized in sky, in beast, in man.