

The Raftsmen's Song

I believe some dust of the wanderlust has been molded with my clay;
Though I long to come to my home sweet home, it's never long I'll stay.
Perhaps a surge of the water's urge from the Laurentides to the sea
That stirs the flood of the rover's blood in old waterdogs like me.
So I long to go back to the Pontiac, to the river where the rafts flow through,
To wend my way to the Dutchman's Bay and along the Roche Fondue,
To camp at the foot of the mountain chute where in fancy I heard the strain
Of the raftsmen's song as they swept along, a-singing their bold refrain:

Chorus: Now row, boys, row, through the channel we will go

With a heave and a ho hi ho,

Now row boys, row, shoot the rapids down below

With a heave and a ho hi ho.

There are raftsmen's bones 'neath cairn of stone where the foam-white waters toss,
And many a mound where the rapids sound has been marked with a pine or cross,
For grim death stalks where the treach'rous rocks have thrust from the channel's bed,
And many who set out with a hail and a shout have come down the cascades dead.
Oh, the Calumet crags and the Dargy snags and the reef where the Sable flings,
And the Iroquois Nose and the Devil's Toes, and the Teeth and Three Great Kings,
And woe betide if it swings too wide at the portage bridge's pier;
They would crash on the rocks with a shuddering shock that would chill your blood with fear.

Those old raftsmen who were singing then, they're scattered far today;
No more they'll ride Carmichael's slide or plunge into Roche Manay.
No more they'll go by the Devil's Bow in their roaring, reckless scorn;
No more they'll try for the lazy snye or swing around Cape Horn.
When word comes through for a timber crew for the river beyond the skies,
They'll ride the slide through the Great Divide, coming clear into heaven's snyes.
Those old raftmen will be happy then with the Lord to pay their fee,
A-singing their song as they sail along on the river of eternity.