

Hank Snow

"Cremation Of Sam McGee"

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There are strange things done in the midnight sun by
the men who toil for gold
The Arctic trails have their secret tales that would make
your blood run cold
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights but the
queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge I
cremated Sam McGee

Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee where the cotton
blooms and blows
Why he left his home in the South to roam round the
Pole God only knows
He was always cold but the land of gold seemed to
hold him like a spell
Though he'd often say in his homely way that he'd
sooner live in hell

On a Christmas Day we were mushing our way over the
Dawson trail
Talk of your cold through the parka's fold it stabbed
like a driven nail
If our eyes we'd close then the lashes froze till
sometimes we couldn't see
It wasn't much fun but the only one to whimper was
Sam McGee

And that very night as we lay packed tight in our robes
beneath the snow
And the dogs were fed and the stars o'er head were
dancing heel and toe
He turned to me and Cap says he I'll cash in this trip I
guess
And if I do I'm asking that you won't refuse my last
request

Well he seemed so low that I couldn't say no then he
says with a sort of moan
It's the cursed cold and it's got right hold till I'm chilled
clean through to the bone
Yet taint being dead it's my awful dread of the icy
grave that pains

So I want you to swear that foul or fair you'll cremate
my last remains

A pal's last need is a thing to heed so I swore I would
not fail
And we started on at the streak of dawn but God! he
looked ghastly pale
He crouched on the sleigh and he raved all day of his
home in Tennessee
And before nightfall a corpse was all that was left of
Sam McGee

There wasn't a breath in that land of death and I
hurried horror-driven
With a corpse half hid that I couldn't get rid because of
a promise given
It was lashed to the sleigh and it seemed to say you
may tax your brawn and brains
But you promised true and it's up to you to cremate
those last remains

Now a promise made is a debt unpaid and the trail has
its own stern code
In the days to come though my lips were dumb in my
heart how I cursed that load
In the long long night by the lone firelight while the
huskies round in a ring
Howled out their woes to the homeless snows oh God!
how I loathed the thing

And every day that quiet clay seemed to heavy and
heavier grow
And on I went though the dogs were spent and the grub
was getting low
The trail was bad and I felt half mad but I swore I would
not give in
And I'd often sing to the hateful thing and it hearkened
with a grin

Till I came to the marge of Lake Lebarge and a derelict
there lay
It was jammed in the ice but I saw in a trice it was called
the Alice May
And I looked at it and I thought a bit and I looked at my
frozen chum
Then Here said I with a sudden cry is my crematorium

Some planks I tore from the cabin floor and I lit the
boiler fire
Some coal I found that was lying around and I heaped
the fuel higher

The flames just soared and the furnace roared such a
blaze you seldom see
And I burrowed a hole in the glowing coal and I stuffed
in Sam McGee

Then I made a hike for I didn't like to hear him sizzle so
And the heavens scowled and the huskies howled and
the wind began to blow
It was icy cold but the hot sweat rolled down my cheeks
and I don't know why
And the greasy smoke in an inky cloak went streaking
down the sky

I do not know how long in the snow I wrestled with grisly
fear
But the stars came out and they danced about ere
again I ventured near
I was sick with dread but I bravely said: I'll just take a
peep inside
I guess he's cooked and it's time I looked then the door
I opened wide

And there sat Sam looking cool and calm in the heart of
the furnace roar
And he wore a smile you could see a mile and he said
please close that door
It's fine in here but I greatly fear you'll let in the cold
and storm
Since I left Plumtree down in Tennessee it's the first
time I've been warm

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