

## SEEDS OF A NEW HOUSE

And there were days . . .

Days I loved . . .

When big machines

Came to my street

Tearing the earth

Of the vacant lot

With their great noise . . .

Erupting the soil,

Leaving long furrows

For the seeds of a new house.

And how I loved those days . . .

Walking to the edge

Of young dreams,

Where each mound

Torn from the bottomless pit

Became the peaks of the Pyrenees . . .

Deserts of the Sahara . . .

And, on rainy days,

The basin of the Nile . . .

The mudflats of the Amazon

Of longing until the bricks came.

When muddy hands

Sculptured castles medieval . . .

Roads to the Orient . . .

Paths for the soul to wander.

Ah, but then a tear

Rolled down a sandy cheek.

For too soon . . . too terribly soon

Did the seeds grow

And transparent people come to live.

People . . . people planting . . . changing  
     A boyhood world of fantasy  
     Into a tomb of lost dreams,  
     Filled with broken webs  
 Of shattered moods . . . ruptured joys  
     Changed that world of laughter  
     Into a mailing address.  
     "Occupant. . . .  
 Such and such a number . . .  
     So and so street."

Green water-grass shot up  
     On the grave of great joy.  
     Death, proclaimed in technicolor  
     By rainbow flower-beds.  
 And whenever the little boy passed . . .  
     Passed the cemetery of lost days . . .  
     The grave of days gone down  
     With Columbus and Cortez,  
 With Sherman, Grant, and Lee . . .  
     There was seen an epitaph.

The last remains sanctified . . .  
 There for the lad to see . . .  
     A little sign,  
     Bathed in forlorn faces,  
 Bathed in long-drawn memories,  
     Lost and found again . . .  
     Boldly called back from the dead.  
     There, in that little sign . . .  
 Those unforgettable four words.  
     "Keep off the grass!"

—A. J. CLEVELAND, JR.