

## THE CALF PATH

By Sam Walter Foss (1896)

One day through the primeval wood  
a calf walked home as good calves should;  
but made a trail all bent askew,  
a crooked trail as calves all do.  
Since then three hundred years have fled,  
and I infer the calf is dead.  
But still he left behind his trail,  
and thereby hangs my moral tale.  
The trail was taken up next day  
by a lone dog that passed that way;  
and then a wise bellwether sheep  
pursued the trail o'er vale and steep  
and drew the flock behind him, too  
as good bellwethers always do.  
And from that day, o'er hill and glade,  
through these old woods a path was made.  
And many men wound in and out,  
and dodged and turned and bent about,  
and uttered words of righteous wrath  
because 'twas such a crooked path;  
but still they followed...do not laugh,  
the first migrations of that calf.  
This forest path became a lane,  
that bent and turned and turned again.  
This crooked lane became a road,  
where many a poor horse with his load  
toiled on beneath the burning sun  
and traveled some three miles in one.  
And thus a century and a half  
they trod the footsteps of that calf.  
The years passed on in swiftness fleet;  
the road became a village street;  
And this, before men were aware,  
a city's crowded thoroughfare.  
And soon the central street was this  
of a renowned metropolis,  
and men two centuries and a half  
trod in the footsteps of that calf.



A hundred thousand men were led  
by one calf near three centuries dead.  
For men are prone to go it blind  
along the calf-paths of the mind  
and work away from sun to sun  
to do what other men have done.  
They follow in the beaten track,  
and out and in, and forth and back,  
and still their devious course pursue,  
to keep the path that others do.  
They keep the path a sacred groove  
along which all their lives they move,  
but how the wise old wood gods laugh  
who saw the first primeval calf!

