

## PITTSBURGH

*Oppenheim, James, 1882-1932*

Over his face his gray hair drifting hides his Labor-glory in smoke,  
Strange through his breath the soot is sifting, his feet are buried in coal and coke.  
By night hands twisted and lurid in fires, by day hands blackened with grime and oil,  
He toils at the foundries and never tires, and ever and ever his lot is toil.

He speeds his soul till his body wrestles with terrible tonnage and terrible time.  
Out through the yards and over the trestles the flat-cars clank and the engines chime,  
His mills through windows seem eaten with fire, his high cranes travel, his ingots roll.  
And billet and wheel and whistle and wire shriek with the speeding up of his soul.

Lanterns with reds and greens a-glisten wave the way and the headlight glares,  
The back-bent laborers glance and listen and out through the night the tail-light flares —  
Deep in the mills like a tipping cradle the huge converter turns on its wheel  
And sizzling spills in the ten-ton ladle a golden water of molten steel.

Yet screwed with toil his low face searches shadow-edged fires and whited pits,  
Gripping his levers his body lurches, grappling his irons he prods and hits,  
And deaf with the roll and clangor and rattle with its sharp escaping staccato of steam.  
And blind with flame and worn with battle, into his tonnage he turns his dream.

The world he has builded rises around us, our wonder-cities and weaving rails,  
Over his wires a marvel has found us, a glory rides in our wheeled mails,  
For the Earth grows small with strong Steel woven, and they come together who plotted apart —  
But he who has wrought this thing in his oven knows only toil and the tired heart.