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ANOTHER DIMENSION

The Calf-Path

—Sam Walter Foss, Public Domain

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 all calves 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 bell-wether sheep
 Pursued the trail o'er vale and steep,
 And drew the flock behind him, too,
 As good bell-wethers always do.
 And from that day, o'er hill and glade,
 Through those 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,
 And though this winding wood-way stalked
 Because he wobbled when he walked.
 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 thus a century and a half
 They trod the footsteps of that calf.
 The years passed on in swift 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.
 Each day a hundred thousand rout
 Followed this zigzag calf about
 And o'er his crooked journey went
 The traffic of a continent.
 A hundred thousand men were led
 By one calf near three centuries dead.
 They followed still his crooked way.
 And lost one hundred years a day,
 For thus such reverence is lent
 To well-established precedent.
 A moral lesson this might teach
 Were I ordained and called to preach;
 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.
 Ah, many things this tale might teach —
 But I am not ordained to preach.