THE ALASKA HIGHWAY

NORMA E. SMITH

I am the highway!
I am the girdle
Binding the hemispheres
Conceived in the brain
Of the Ancient of Days,
Hidden millenniums
In secret places,
Under the mountains,
Under the forests,
Under the snows,
Under the ices
Of ages successive.

I am the highway!
In the fulness of time
I appeared at God's orders
Whispered to men
Whose ears were attentive,
Attuned to His power
Who saw me unwinding
Into their dreams
Ere the first axe
Laid low the first hemlock.

Men of the Northlands,
Resourceful and visionful!

I am the highway!
I murmured in wheels
Of lorries and derricks,
Whistled in axe strokes
Sang in the voices
Of men as they sweated,
Pulling and chopping,
Tearing and clearing,
Using their instruments
Monsters of wood
Of steel and of chromium,
Lengthening, widening,
And the high spruce trees
Fell with the fir trees.
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Toiling men, weary men
Sleeping in cabins
While outside the tempests
Muted my music,
Roughened my surface,
Daunted my makers
Until the white star
Of the morning came over.
Think of the spirit
With which they constructed me
As white wings and grey wings
Flashed paths for more wings.

Slowly but surely
I've cradled the rivers
Tucked blue-eyed lakes
In the curve of my elbow,
Caressed the bald heads
Of the rugged-faced Rockies
Revealing the beauty
Of two noble countries,
Vastness and narrowness
Pasture and mountainside
Prairie and hilltop.

Wheels, wings and waters
Turning and soaring,
Winding and twisting,
Above and below,
Onward and upward,
Forward and southward,
Eastward and westward,
Encompassing, holding
Two nations in amity
In close communion
In a true brotherhood.

I am the highway!
Wedding two continents,
Unfolding the bud
Of the many-leaved Future!