

The Man on the Road

As I walked down the road with guitar and with pack,
I met with a stranger whose way crossed my track.
He fell in beside me; as onward we walked,
It seemed like he knew me, the way that he talked.

He had no rucksack with him, and no hiking gear,
Though he wasn't a local man, as I could hear.
We stopped for a rest, and I laid down my load,
But he sighed and said, "It's a long, weary road!"

When I offered him water, he declined my canteen;
He'd got some from a woman at a well where he'd been.
I asked if he wanted to eat, but he said
Two men he had met took him in for some bread.

Then I said, "If you're footsore, I've liniment here."
"Thank you kindly," he answered, "But never you fear,
For a lady I know, she anointed my feet,
And she dried with her hair all the ointment so sweet."

"So what can I do for you?" I asked in despair.
He said, "Give me a song to that guitar right there."
"But I'm just a simple folk-singer!" I cried --
"And I'm just a carpenter's son," he replied.

Now I sang him a song that I never had heard,
Yet I found every chord, and I knew every word.
He applauded me after I'd strummed the last bars,
And I saw that his hands were both pitted with scars.

"I know you!" I gasped, and my heart filled with dread,
And, aware of my meanness, I lowered my head.
"I'm footsore and hungry and thirsty," said he,
"And I'm sure you've met many a poor man like me.

"But there's people can give them enough food and drink,
And of bodily comfort, there's more than you think.
But you can regale them, guitar on your knee,
And whenever you sing for them, sing one for me!"

