

The Careless Smoker

(Apologies to Kipling)

A fool there was and his pipe he lit
 (Even as you and I)
On a forest trail where the leaves were fit
To become ablaze from the smallest bit
Of spark—and the fool he furnished it
 The day was windy and dry.

The forest was burned to its very roots,
 Even beneath the ground,
With the flowers, the birds and the poor dumb brutes,
Old hoary oaks, and the tender shoots
Which might have made logs but for such galoots
 Allowed to wander round.

The lumber jack has now passed on
 His pay-day comes no more
And the screech-owls haunt the camp at dawn
Where the cook's tin pan woke the men of brawn
But the mill is silent, the trees are gone,
 The soil and the forest floor.

A deadly sight are those hills of rocks
 Which once were beds of green,
No hope for the human, no food for the flocks
The floods must be held by expensive locks
And the harbor is silted to the docks
 The ships no more are seen.

But the fool smokes on in the forest still
 Leaves camp-fires burning too
While the patient public pays the bill
And the nation's wealth is destroyed for nil
If the law doesn't get him, Old Satan will
 When his smoking days are through.

*By Harris A. Reynolds in "*The Open Road*."