

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

8 *Cain and Abel*

Western Version

Cain and Abel were brothers born.

*(Koop-la! Come along, cows!)*

One raised cattle and one raised corn.

*(Koop-la! Come along! Co-hoe!)*

And Cain he farmed by the river-side,

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So he did not care how much it dried.

For he banked, and he sluiced, and he ditched and he led

*(And the Corn don't care for the Horn) —*

A-half Euphrates out of her bed

To water his dam' Corn!

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But Abel herded out on the plains

Where you have to go by the dams and the rains.

It happened, after a three-year drought,

The wells, and the springs, and the dams gave out.

The Herd-bulls came to Cain's new house

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*(They wanted water so! —)*

With the hot red Sun between their brows,

Sayin' "Give us water for our pore cows!"

But Cain he told 'em — "No!"

The Cows they came to Cain's big house

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With the cold white Moon between their brows,

Sayin' "Give some water to us pore cows!"

But Cain he told 'em — "No!"

The li'l Calves came to Cain's fine house  
With the Evenin' Star between their brows, 25  
Sayin' "Give us water an' we'll be cows!"  
But Cain he told 'em — "No!"

The Herd-bulls led 'em back again,  
An' Abel went an' said to Cain: —  
"Oh, sell me water, my brother dear, 30  
Or there will be no beef this year."  
And Cain he answered — "No!"

"Then draw your hatches, my brother true,  
An' let a little water through."  
But Cain he answered: — "No! 35

"My dams are tight an' my ditches are sound,  
An' not a drop goes through or round  
Till she's done her duty by the Corn

"I will not sell, an' I will not draw,  
An' if you breach, I'll have the Law, 40  
As sure as you are born!"

Then Abel took his best bull-goad,  
An' holed a dyke on the Eden road.

He opened her up with foot an' hand,  
An' let Euphrates loose on the land. 45

He spilled Euphrates out on the plain,  
So's all his cattle could drink again.

Then Cain he saw what Abel done —  
But, in those days, there was no Gun!

So he made him a club of a hickory-limb, 50  
An' halted Abel an' said to him: —

“I did not sell an’ I did not draw,  
An’ now you’ve breached I’ll have the Law.

“You ride abroad in your hat an’ spurs,  
Hell-hoofin’ over my cucumbers! 55

“You pray to the Lord to send you luck  
An’ you loose your steers in my garden-truck:

“An’ now you’re bust, as you ought to be,  
You can keep on prayin’ but not to me!”

Then Abel saw it meant the life; 60  
But, in those days, there was no Knife:

So he up with his big bull-goad instead,  
But — Cain hit first and dropped him dead!

The Herd-bulls ran when they smelt the blood,  
An’ horned an’ pawed in that Red Mud. 65  
The Calves they bawled, and the Steers they milled,  
Because it was the First Man Killed;  
An’ the whole Herd broke for the Land of Nod,  
An’ Cain was left to be judged by God!

But, seein’ all he had had to bear, 70  
I never could call the Judgment fair!

1934

(From *Rudyard Kipling’s Verse*. Definitive edition. London,  
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