

The Toll-Gate House

John Drinkwater

THE toll-gate's gone, but still stands lone,
In the dip of the hill, the house of stone,
And over the roof in the branching pine
The great owl sits in the white moonshine.
An old man lives, and lonely, there,
His windows yet on the cross-roads stare,
And on Michaelmas night in all the years
A galloping far and faint he hears. . . .
His casement open wide he flings
With "Who goes there," and a lantern swings. . . .
But never more in the dim moonbeam
Than a cloak and a plume and the silver gleam
Of passing spurs in the night can he see,
For the toll-gate's gone and the road is free.



John Drinkwater was born in Leytonstone, Essex, England on June 1, 1882. He was the son a schoolmaster who turned to acting. He grew up in Oxfordshire and, left school at 15. He became an insurance agent, but found the work uninteresting and turned to literature. He published his first volume of poetry at the age of 21. He was one of the group of poets associated with the Gloucestershire village of Dymock, along with Rupert Brooke and others. He was a founding member of the Pilgrim Players and became the first manager of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. John also became a literary critic and wrote stories for children, but his greatest success was as a playwright.

He was married to Daisy Kennedy, the ex-wife of Benno Moiseiwitsch.

John Drinkwater died on March 21, 1937.