

IRIS PARKER CORRY

THE YEAR OF THE FAMINE

When the iron works was shutting down
and you couldn't buy a sack of flour
in Cedar Valley at any price
(grasshoppers we had — but no gulls),
the Lord sent mushrooms.

Outside the town they umbrellaed
on the black creek bank
and in scant shade —
everywhere the benign toadstools.
Mornings we gathered them — always enough.
For Sunday dinner a little flour
to thicken the juice, and pigweed greens.

In the fall an abundance of
honeydew fell on the willows.
We fetched washtubs and other vessels
and rinsed the branches in water
and it boiled down
to the beautifullest syrup I ever tasted.

In the year of the famine, 1856.