So, thence—

into the matter, shag ice on the water
rimed around the boats, which sink.

thus: onto & plunging through it,
poking at the problem with a stick,
men chopping away knee deep in the slurry
while at their backs
the great sideways-blowing, always oncoming

wind

siege-like, abiding in the dark
beyond the parapets, in which
no country, no philosophy, no emissary
or allegiance, no god liveth

unless it be by the flicker of tallow candles
(Clark at his maps)
or in a blacksmith’s sense of providence—
(Joe Shields, US Army)
at his coke hole of charred pitch pine
forge fuel, covered with dirt,
against wind-flare, or “God’s bellows.”

He tends the smoking pile, while others
intermingle with the Big Bellies
a few squabbles already abrew—

(Some little Miss understanding
thro jelloucy)
so that Cruzat is sent (again) with his fiddle
and York with his *physique extraordinaire*
to wow ’em in their huts, &c. . . .

Meanwhile, the sergeant knows a proper smolder,
banked down, will warm the winter,
& prove up the morning we wake, cold & hungry
and find him,
banging out sheet-iron for village corn.

---

—*a very Cold frostbitten morning*

*the Sun Shows*—

*mutatis mutandis*—two images
floating in the atmosphere, rainbows
hover mandala-like over the *ménage à corps*—
    so cold one man
    complains his pecker froze,

another’s arse needs
    defrosting in a water tub—
Another spends Christmastide with a fever
while those more merrily disposed
    fire guns & cannon,
& head for a frolic with the village women:

which commences, come evening,
    with the calling of the Buffaloes—

—*First, tawny damsels offer themselves*—

a sort of boy scout’s wet dream
    (for quick reference, Lads!
*c.f.* Moulton, pg 90; Bergon, Penguin edition, pg 84,

the operative part, *in flagrante*
    found also in Biddle’s latin translatio)—

12
—next the wife, with the spreading of her body
rekindles the old man—

multum ille jactatus est
(but enfeebled by age, it seems)
frustra jactatus est,

though in this way,
of course, all manner of things derive:

—the white men with their shining mirrors
like solid water held in the hand
brilliant as the sun
& which sometimes show their faces—

& shows even now, down the city boulevards,
with the traffic’s ebb and flow
down the Avenue of the Americas,
the sun-torched flare,
that blinds us,
of an afternoon,
—that swept them like a prairie fire.