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THE CALF PATH

The following from an unidentified source describes the "calf path, city street and country road." It could easily be paraphrased to indicate the "calf path" of bookkeeping and office routine maintained in thousands of "conservative" business concerns:

One day through the primeval wood
 A calf walked home, as good calves should;
 But made a trail all bent askew,
 A crooked trail, as all calves do.
 Since then two hundred years have fled,
 And, I infer, the calf is dead.
 But still he left behind his trail,
 And thereby hangs a mortal tale.
 The trail was taken up next day
 By a lone dog that passed that way.
 And then a wise bell-wether sheep
 Pursued the trail o'er vale and steep.
 And drew the flock behind him, too,
 As good bell-wethers always do.
 And from that day, o'er hill and glade,
 Through those old woods a path was made.
 And many men wound in and out,
 And dodged and turned and bent about.
 And uttered words of righteous wrath,
 Because 'twas such a crooked path;
 But still they followed—do not laugh—
 The first migration of that calf.
 And through this winding woodway stalked
 Because he wobbled when he walked.
 This forest path became a lane,
 That bent and turned and turned again;
 This crooked lane became a road,
 Where many a poor horse, with his load,
 Toiled on beneath the burning sun,
 And traveled some three miles in one.
 And thus a century and a half
 They trod the footsteps of that calf.
 The years passed on in swift fleet,
 The road became a village street.
 And this, before men were aware,
 A city's crowded thoroughfare.
 And soon the central street was this
 Of a renowned metropolis.
 And men two centuries and a half
 Trod in the footsteps of that calf;
 Each day a hundred thousand rout
 Followed the zigzag calf about;
 And o'er his crooked journey went
 The traffic of a continent.
 A hundred thousand men were led
 By one calf near three centuries dead.

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