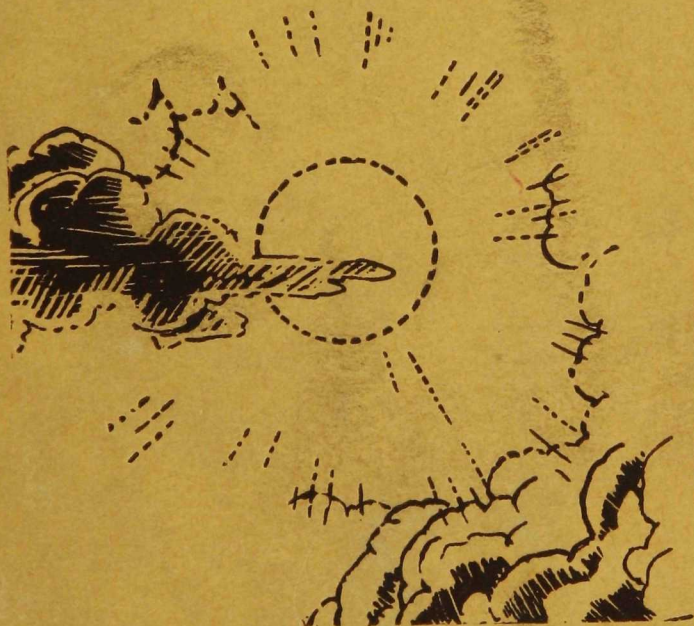


I TRAVEL
to the
POETS' MART



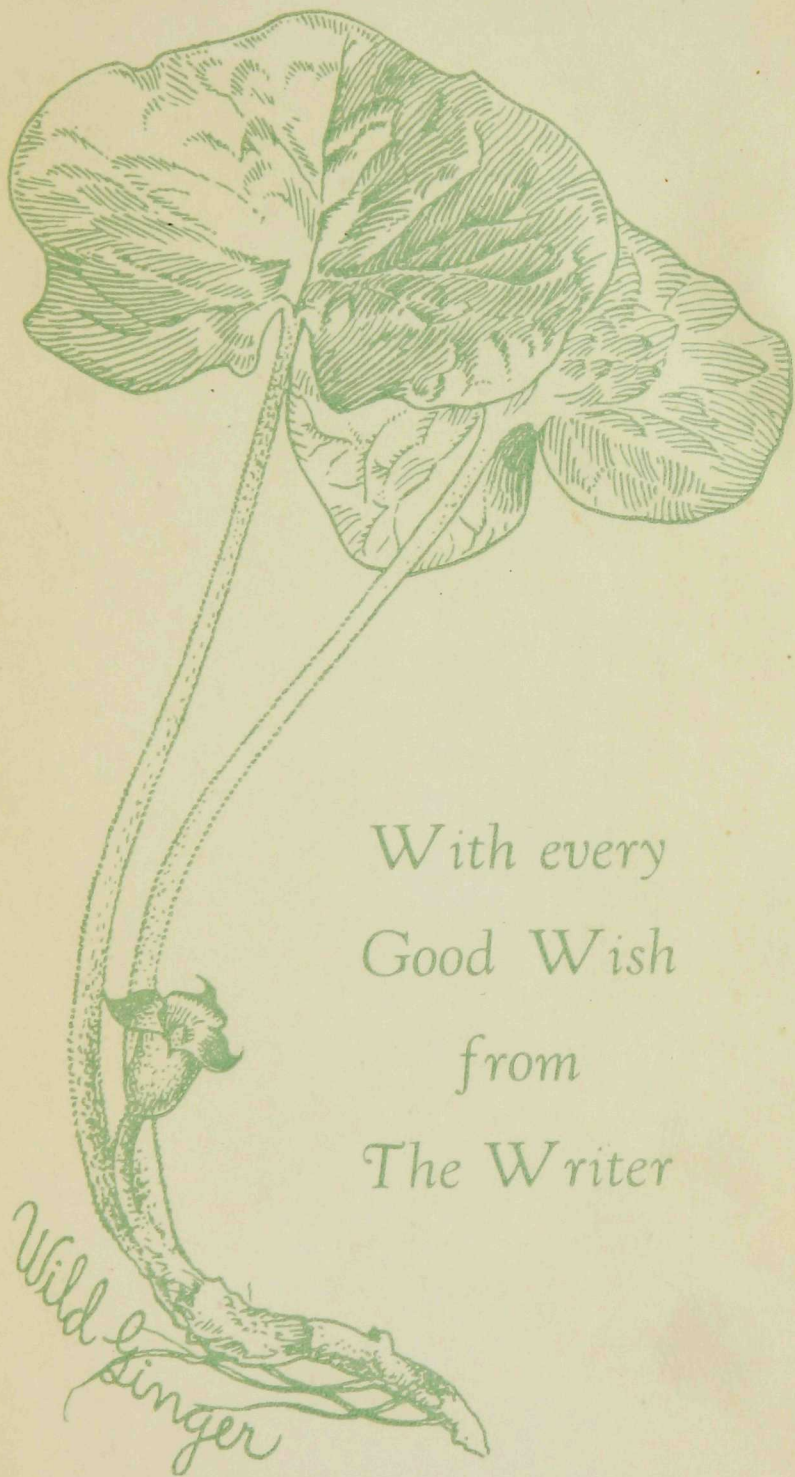
By
Amy Redpath Roddick
Montreal

Presented by the
UNIVERSITY BOOK CLUB



351777

1943



With every
Good Wish
from
The Writer

I Travel to the Poets' Mart

f

By

AMY REDPATH RODDICK

(All Rights Reserved)

MONTREAL
JOHN DOUGALL & SON
1936

PS8535 04 I2 1936
Roddick, Amy Redpath,
I travel to the poets' mart
~~Y82P/R64i/2~~ 71117741

McLENNAN LIBRARY
McGILL UNIVERSITY

*OTHER BOOKS BY THE SAME
AUTHOR*

"The Flag and Other Poems."

"The Armistice and Other Poems."

"The Seekers, An Indian Mystery Play."

"The Birth of Montreal, A Chronicle
Play; and Other Poems."

"The Romance of a Princess, and Other
Poems."

"In a Venetian Garden, and St. Ursula,
Two Plays."

"From Montreal Elsewhere."

(All Rights Reserved)

CONTENTS



I TRAVEL TO THE POETS' MART	1
THE ST. JEAN-BAPTISTE PROCESSION	2
HYMN TO JEANNE MANCE	5
ONE TEAR	6
PERFECTION	7
SPARKLES	8
ST. AUGUSTINE	9
ONCE ON A CLASSIC HEIGHT	10
THE TRAIL	11
CHRISTMAS ROSES	12
PLACE ROYALE	13
FOUR SONNETS ON THE SONNET	14
PUNINESS AND MAGNITUDE	18
IMAGINATION	19
TRIOLETS	20
LIFE'S DOWER	21
ONE EARLY SPRING	22
FOR JACQUELINE	23
THREE FAITHS	24
BEFORE A STATUE OF THE BUDDHA	25
ABOVE BRICK WALLS	26
TRUE CONTENT	27
CHANGING TIMES	28
THEN AN UPPER ORCHARD	29
WILD GINGER	30
THE DESERT'S REBUFF	34
EARTH'S MELODY	40
THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES	43
PERFECT SPIRIT	49
GOD UNDERSTOOD	50
BEYOND HIS KEN	50
APOLLO'S PARTING GIFT	51
TO THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS	52

I TRAVEL TO THE POETS' MART

A lovely song is in my heart:
It has no words; but is a part
 Of my own self. I wonder much
 If I could venture now to touch
A golden ray or speed a dart
To win a star: I try a start
And should it fail I lack in art;
 Still it might do at least to crutch
A lovely song.

I travel to the Poet's mart
On foot or in a bullock cart;
 Apollo's car, sky-faring such
 Elude my reach: I can just clutch
My wagon's lamp that may not swart
A lovely song.

THE ST. JEAN-BAPTISTE PROCESSION

(In 1928 it featured songs and was postponed
on account of rain until Dominion Day)

The bands roll forth a jocund song,
With tuneful pomp they wend along.

Good Drummer pray: what day is this?
Kind Mademoiselle, I blow a kiss:
We keep with joy the lated feast
For him we love, Saint Jean-Baptiste:
Dominion day, proud banners fly,
A golden day with festal sky.

The bands roll forth a jocund song,
With tuneful pomp they wend along.

And past our house they bravely come:
Each gorgeous float, the drum on drum:
With fitting verve, with true acclaim
The crowds respond, and colours flame;
A great parade inspiring all
Obedient to their country's call.

The bands roll forth a jocund song,
With tuneful pomp they wend along.

THE ST. JEAN-BAPTISTE PROCESSION

A garland strung by royal France,
The fragrant lays of rich romance:
The music of the fiddler's charm,
The music of the court and farm,
In swelling strains, it proffers cheer:
Applaud! Applaud! Gay scenes appear.

The bands roll forth a jocund song,
With tuneful pomp they wend along.

Among the gems of bright Quebec
The hauling chanteys trolled on deck,
The fountain's lure, the mill affair,
The breezy bridge, round dances there,
The picnic lark of quaint delight,
The Noel bell on silvered night.

The bands roll forth a jocund song,
With tuneful pomp they wend along.

Emerging from a doughty past,
Attaining thus a future vast;
These fervent airs breathe out to-day
The maple leaf's most starry sway;
Glad listeners unite as one
In dreams achieved, in dreams begun.

THE ST JEAN-BAPTISTE PROCESSION

The bands roll forth a jocund song,
With tuneful pomp they wend along.

Then here at length the Saint we wait,
For whom the train of goodly state;
His wooden cross an oriflamme;
While close to him a spotless lamb:
Tradition's voice invokes anew,
We hail the child, give homage due.

The bands grow faint till silence reigns,
The throngs disperse, a song remains
Triumphant as this pleasant day
That calendars a memoried way.

HYMN TO JEANNE MANCE

O brave Jeanne Mance whose fame is ours
As in a city's growth it flowers:
The seeds you humbly helped to sow
Give witness still and still they grow
Within tried hearts at mercy's call
In fanes and homes of Montreal,
In hospitals which hail you first
To soothe the sufferer, slack his thirst.

Heroic figure of the past
With Maisonneuve so staunchly classed,
Co-worker with ecstatic souls
Who showed the way to heavenly goals:
We have to-day a debt unpaid
Should we now fail where you have laid
Foundation on the rock of God
In turning thus our virgin sod.

ONE TEAR

I sang to the birds: they twitted back
And nodded the message of June;
I sang to the willows, no sound ensued
Unless a faint, rustling tune.

I sang to the skies, my mood had changed,
Diaphanous clouds appeared,
Light cirri inwrought with haloed charm;
But still an unreason feared.

Pellucid the depth of heaven's blue
Most songful the heart of man,
Then why should the wisps of feathered mist
Disturb a celestial plan?

Or mock at the joys that lurk around,
The trumpeting calls to mirth,
The grandeur of dawn's recurrent tints,
The blooms that embellish earth?

While Love, who adventures through grim lanes,
Content to deliver cheer,
Unviewing a portent, dares a storm
If she can but wipe one tear.

PERFECTION

I sought perfection till I found it:
It was a cottage near the sea;
Where royal palms kept guard around it
With roping woods of mystic glee.

The jasmine, as the days grew longer,
As orange blossoms loosed their scent,
Induced in me a pleasure stronger
Than was the bluebird's trilled content.

The sun upon the magic water
Would change in hue from hour to hour;
Wild beauty burgeoned when light caught her
In jungled nook and mangrove bower.

True love bode in that cottage surely,
A love transcendent like the sky,
Our simple life held it securely—
The rapture that can never die.

SPARKLES

(After some winters spent in the South.)

I saw the sunbeams on the snow,
They quivered, rayed a pool of mirth:
A galaxy in praise of joy—
The diamonds of rainbow worth.

While I: who loved a placid sea,
The bayous greened by earth and sky
As golden sand played upward glow,
As heaven blent its azure dye.

Who loved the palm's deep-fringing frond,
Its gay surrendering of light,
The lustre of the glossy hues
From emerald depth to dappled bright:

Who loved the strange, branch-rooted trees,
The bird that mocks with trills of glee,
The turtle sunning on her log
In very pride of ecstasy:

Who loved the South and was at home
Amid such charm of coloured wealth—
Odd shells, rare blooms and ferny growth
Inciting tunes that prosper health;

Still was enamoured of the snow,
The purity and chill disdain
For lavishment which heat provokes:
Our sparkling North hailed me again.

ST. AUGUSTINE

(The oldest town in the United States.)

St. Augustine, your very name is sweet,
 Bewitching thought with old-world ties; the mock
 And chivalry of time unite to stock
Their lore in church and park and narrow street
That vend antiquity; and moderns meet
 Beneath indulgent skies which set the clock
 To when the brave Sevillan tapped a rock;
Whence sprang the fount of youth with dreams replete.

If savage guile, if harsh retort once dimmed
 Your flowery heart, if buccaneer and slave
Made blots upon your fragrant fame, gave need
For Spanish bayonets whose sharp leaves rimmed
 Defence—such acts build now an architrave
To palm-fringed frieze expounding lustrous deed.

ONCE ON A CLASSIC HEIGHT

Is there in this dear world more true delight
Than harping melodies where idylls are,
Collecting lyric sparks from Phoebus' car
In a proud Grecian isle which teems with bright?
Thus once I chanced upon a classic height,
Wreathed fauns, shy satyrs pranked. I saw afar
That knowing god, Silenos; while a star
He meward flipped in spellful, spinning flight.

I caught it, was entranced with silvan things,
Knew nature through her heart, her inner cheer:
The sport of pagan times was mine that day,
Its musicry and charm. I sought the wings
Of Pegasos, to hymn those Great whose clear,
Discerning minds unmasked such spirit play.

THE TRAIL

To tread a certain forest I was born:

 There blaze a trail that leads to solitude;

 Where flit those furtive thoughts that now elude,

The shy, wild things this world has come to scorn.

To wake beneath red pines just tinged with morn,

 My couch, soft moss, spruce-pillowed, sweet though rude,

 My matin call, the bird's full note renewed,

To rise as fades the moon's pale, fleecy horn.

Here marvels are reglimpsed from early dreams,

 A mystic shrine that palpitates with life,

Each leafy sprout, each tree a sentient being,

Jocosely sport the sprites in mountain streams:

 Gay beasts with love, starred flowers with honey rife,

Man's harp and nature's tunes again agreeing.

CHRISTMAS ROSES

Where light airs tossed the heavy blossom scent,
The gorgeous roses climbed about the wall
To hit upon my pane a matin call
Or pry with dulcet ease through trellised vent.
I plucked one, viewed a sky of clear content,
The palms, the groves, those hills uptiered with all
The true sublimity that guards in thrall
One's inner moods with fond emotions blent.

That scene, exotic birds return as then;
Though winter blows its horn while I undo
A box of florist flowers by dear friends planned
To give me mirth on Christmas day: now when
I raise each bud it seems in truth to woo
The soulful dream of a Celestial Land.

PLACE ROYALE

[Just before Christmas.]

The old, the new with Christmas trees for sale,
Fresh fallen snow bring us a message now:
The peace and cheer come from the holy vow
Made by the souls who first invoked the tale
Of Montreal. They pierced the future's veil,
Unviewing bad, they saw the budding bough
Of good that spreads and teaches truly how
Fair visions, launched with love, so rarely fail.

Our Place Royale yet has its memories,
Sweet truths unchangeable though cities change,
Champlain, de Maisonneuve and Jeanne, the nurse,
So many more, who had the golden keys
That open life, we hold as friends—unstrange
To Season's Greetings through my humble verse.

FOUR SONNETS ON THE SONNET
EPITOMIZING LIFE

I.

Playtime

The Sonnet, so I fancy, is a dance:

About we swing with lilting thoughts of glee,
With bursts of song and gliding steps as free
As feathered tribes that spill a sweet romance;
Awaking day with their continuance
Of lightsome sound; until we mayhap see
Above new sprouting of the maple tree
The rosy flush of Heaven's dawning glance.

Still faster goes the round of rhythm's coil,

Returning on itself with perfect ease;
A tribute to a poet stringing words,
If they should wing to him like humming-birds
In skirring darts that fleck the honeyed breeze:
Thus end each tripping line unforced by toil.

FOUR SONNETS ON THE SONNET

II.

Aspiration

I read a book about the Sonnet's power;
How fourteen looping lines in swallow-flight
Can gather words to an empyreal height
Where thought invokes beyond the carping hour.
More truly built than that aspiring tower,
Plunged early earthward, awed by skyey might,
This laming scheme of verse retains its light
And radiates abroad kind Heaven's dower.

Sublimity lies in its fond embrace
When Genius holds his breath—then utters fire;
Still, lesser bards may put therein a glow
That soothes the smart from Life's uncertain race,
Fulfilling thus, in part, a dear desire
To give their dreams at least a patterned flow.

FOUR SONNETS ON THE SONNET

III.

Philosophy

Who much shunned passion and dramatic rage,
 Bewailing utterance some poets hold
 Essential to their art, would trust the mould
The prideful Sonnet shapes, the rounding cage
That errs not right nor left; delights the Sage
 With evenness and balance, virtue's gold:
 Temerity to sing within that fold
Lends peace unrestive as great Plato's page.

He'd class it, I feel sure, with hymns to gods
 And odes in praise of goodly deeds; alone
Admitted to his state of all the lines
The rhythmic-minded ones have penned: what odds
 The beauty of a passage if its tone
Infer unruly mood, unmanly whines?

FOUR SONNETS ON THE SONNET

IV.

Reverie

If Sonnets dwelt on love and mournful sighs,
These were assembled with such subtle art
They lost the frenzy of their early part
To give celestial calm that inward lies.
Could Romeo use quatrains for his cries,
Stern Fate had drawn for him no sudden start;
Yet spared, time-strengthened, he could ease his
heart
Reflecting on a past of tender ties.

Then might the hasting tercets win release
From even the cadence of an ancient grief;
As Rose, responsive to the dwindling sun,
The symmetry of life discerned through peace
Now seems to swallow clouds, a sumptuous thief
Apparelling Day's end with dreams begun.

PUNINESS AND MAGNITUDE

Illusive visions rise from out the past
To mingle with the joyance of the time,
To turn a Poet's thought to measured rhyme
With imagery which may in truth be cast
In light or shadow; till at very last
A sign descends from some ethereal clime,
Diverts the mind to dreamings more sublime
Than paltry verse—a glimpse of some far vast.

'So may a purpose be inferred which holds
The humble soul in touch with high embrace:
The Spirit Force, who shapes the planets' way,
Reveals the magnitude of holy folds,
And strews earth's flowery growth with dewy grace,
May spill to him who craves one gifting ray.

IMAGINATION

O priceless thought evolving from a dream
Of that sweet might-have-been or may-come-true,
Imagination gilding actual rue,
In secret coinage changing dull to gleam.
The heavy pence of life which scarcely teem
With radiance disclose in truth through you
An irised song of hope, a ruddered clue
To fond ascendancy ungot by scheme.

Fulfilment lit with inner force of mind,
Quick glancing reach impulsed by calm and trust,
Apart from burly ways, a glowing torch
According with the progress that's designed
To lead to pure felicity: adjust
What is awry—shed rays that will not scorch.

TRIOLETS

I Knew Not Why

I deeply sighed, then sighed again,
Was troubled; though I knew not why.
My heart was heavy and in vain
I deeply sighed, then sighed again:
The day was happy, cleared by rain:
Would joy-songs wing if I should cry?
I deeply sighed, then sighed again,
Was troubled; though I knew not why.

Majestic Sun

Majestic Sun; pray answer me:
Are you a god as once was taught
Or just a ball of dazzling glee?
Majestic Sun, pray answer me:
I am so near Divinity
Amid those glories you have wrought.
Majestic Sun; pray answer me:
Are you a god as once was taught?

LIFE'S DOWER

I woke one night to breathe a song,
A silent song that blessed,
Unhampered with delusive words
Beyond the clouds in quest.

And ever comes a true response;
When still attains to still,
A fervent urge that lifts the heart,
Makes free the dormant will.

And ever comes a golden ray
That sheds effulgence far,
The glory of celestial theme,
The magic of a star.

And ever comes a hallowed pause,
A time of inner awe,
A nighness to Divinity
Discerned through cosmic law.

And ever comes the Spirit's voice,
That sole, transcendent power;
That Everness, that Always-Is,
Life's Fountain and life's Dower.

ONE EARLY SPRING

1.

O most foolish hyacinths,
You should wait;
Searching March has lion claws,
Why tempt fate?

Bleakish clouds roll winter back,
Feel the blast;
Tender shoots up-pricking here
Will not last.

Piling snow will shrivel them,
Marring all;
Grassy banks presumed too soon,
Chill flakes fall.

Frozen to your bulbous hearts
You will die;
When the sun disports anew—
Just one sigh.

2

Foolish, foolish Questioner,
You must know:
Obstacles are not amiss
As we grow.

Gelid snow will sink away,
Dribbling cheer,
Pooling moisture which we need;
Do not fear.

Like the robin sings the spring
Faith incites,
Nature has accordant laws:
Days and nights.

Regal in magnificence,
Purple-gowned,
April will discover us
Belled and sound.

FOR JACQUELINE

Good Jacqueline demands a verse;
I write her ten, though somewhat terse:
If all I think strove hard as she,
This world would be a realm of glee.
Now, Jacqueline, remember well
Who much achieves has much to tell,
A radiance that cheers the soul
Until it reach a higher goal.
Be firm, be true and skyward look,
Help Angels write in Heaven's book.

THREE FAITHS

Jerusalem, Jerusalem;
Where wails the saddened Jew;
Jerusalem, Jerusalem;
Where comes he now anew.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem;
That has the Christian's praise;
Jerusalem, Jerusalem;
Divided are his ways.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem;
Of thee Mohammed dreamt;
Jerusalem, Jerusalem;
Can one with visions tempt?

Jerusalem, Jerusalem;
Three faiths are blent in thee;
Jerusalem, Jerusalem;
Let man and man agree.

BEFORE A STATUE OF THE BUDDHA

Who bowed before the Buddha knew the still
Depicted in the face that showed the key
To thought unraptured but from sorrow free;
The calm, the crystal calm which can fulfil
With meditative ease the very will
Of life; dispassioned as the pippul-tree
Beneath whose holy boughs desire to be
Was sunk in nothingness, unsmirched by ill.

Our eon, all of this and all of that,
The firmament, the orb on which we live
Dissolve amid receding power to prove
That High Transcendency can serve a gnat,
Can father man or can the message give:
Glad tidings come and heavenly wingings move.

ABOVE BRICK WALLS

This world may be most evil; still I think
 There's promise in a day that lauds the sun:
 So decked Spring woods, why search the skeleton
Beneath embroidering green and pearly pink
Of glad arbutus tufts that shyly wink
 The jocundness of life, the airy fun
 Absorbed by picnickers who rise from dun
To toy with silvan moods that inward sink.

Frail Beauty wards us with a gifting light:
 Recalled, it glows again though death be near,
Though sorrows prod with harsh, devouring pain,
Though all one treasured most be lost in flight:
 We have a lamping that is more than fear;
Above brick walls angelic fancies reign.

TRUE CONTENT

The bygone Christmasses have sweetened this
That comes the last, excelling all before,
As might a lyric song that culls the store
Of outer things, reflecting inner bliss.
The fun, the magic games, the stolen kiss
Beneath the mistletoe conduct to more
Than tinsel tree: they seem the happy core
Of life itself, devoid of what's amiss.

Dear friendliness, dim-vistaed scenes return
With added force: the fragrance which enfolds
The soul and veils from harsh, unkind lament,
Unveiling peace, distraught by no concern
In time's despite: so much beyond it holds
The mystic certainty of true content.

CHANGING TIMES

[We motored two Chiefs to a Powwow at Banff]

The grand Chief knew no other than the tongue
That echoed with the call of wind and sky;
The freedom of vast plains; the timid sigh
Of waking buds; the noisy music flung
By water hurtling irised spray among
Those else so silent heights whose spells defy
The city-born; yet keep in firmest tie
The Indian heart athrob with nature sung.

The young Chief, mission-schooled, spoke with disdain
About the White-Man's ways—his lauded work
Enslaving him, its ugliness, the smell
From motors marring earth; but then again,
As though to make amends, amid such irk
There were some raptures and the Christmas bell.

THEN AN UPPER ORCHARD

Where Redpath Crescent loops, there once we played:

It was an upper orchard; then a bower
Of loveliness grown wild, each perky flower,
Each pushing stalk was ours and dreams obeyed.
The violet, the preaching Jack so staid,
Gay columbine, pale jewel-weeds that cower,
The clinging saxifrage enjoyed their hour,
And apple blossoms blew intrancing shade.

Do children now in those trim homes and plots
Feel half the joy; the true, ecstatic lure
That led us on through lilac undergrowth
To find rich treasures in the strangest spots,
Attended by good squirrels quite secure
With us who never failed their woodland troth?

WILD GINGER

[As found some years ago on the wooded slope just
above Côte des Neiges Road.]

1

A shadbush blows its filmy flowers,
Wee chandeliers those elfin showers;
While tapping it, a thorny spray
Retells the tale of blossomed May.
With puffs of pride an elderberry
Shows off before a slim choke-cherry:
And just above a spreading tree
Is loaded down with dulcet glee;
Each coral bud, inticing chalice
Lies close to each, unmoved by malice;
Each now affirms its neighbour's worth
From petaled charm to fruity mirth.

2

Away beneath, all dressed in yellow,
A violet lisps with voice so mellow:
"For them a fruitage, redly hued,
For me unraying solitude
With none to see and none to listen,
Unless perk blades that prick and glisten."
"A golden spot, so I should think;
Where sunbeams dance and grasses drink
Celestial fire: unknowing joyance
I live apart with fell annoyance.
If mere pretence led me to feign
A breath of joy where fairies reign

WILD GINGER

The skies would fall on an infringer:
What bard has lauded poor Wild Ginger?"
Complains a sad, disgruntled bloom,
Pavilioned by a smutchy gloom.
Ill carrion-flies, vile gnats discover
What is no prize for gay-winged lover.

3

A bee accosts the violet;
That stiffens from a dewy fret;
Some butterflies, with sylphid lightness,
Sip nectar from enwreathing whiteness.
A grackle preens upon the crab,
Then clicks and clacks as though to blab
The message of a vernal union
With tree and bird in true communion.
While lost in dream a poet lies
On a sunned rock; there idly tries
To flip away a moisty pricking
That teases him: through sudden tricking
He notes beneath twin darkish leaves
A dowdy flower which scarcely heaves
Above a fusty mass of tangle:
So dully robed its tones would jangle
Should it attempt a song of spring,
It is like flesh, long mouldering.

WILD GINGER

4

He lifts it though, in prodding under,
Then turns it round, expressing wonder.
Within the cup there is a star,
On calyx curve rare markings are
Suggestive of Nile-pillared glory,
A miniature of some great story.
He peers beyond death's hallowed grim,
Illusive thoughts enveigling him,
The vistaed woods become much vaster,
The flower has changed to alabaster.
It shimmers as the quested Grail,
Discerning through the future's veil;
The roseate star asserts a morrow
Wiped free from grief, from mordant sorrow.
A mystery pervades the whole,
Occult as some divining soul.

5

If other blooms have gauzier splendour,
This thickset one appears to render
More odic force, intenser sway
Than genial spring, earth's roundelay.
Such curious fancies rise unbidden
From out that plant estranged and hidden.
Who understands the quirks and why
Of rhythmic tunes that seem to fly,
Expanding with awakened vision,
Unveered mayhap by planned decision,

WILD GINGER

From somewhere, nowhere, till they rest
In broodful ease with thought confessed?
And thus a poem comes amending
From little cause to soulful ending:
A tribute to a tender mood
Or could it be life's altitude?
Wild Ginger's plaint attains small answer
When questions bide with a romancer;
Unless devoted service sings
From grisly depth on carrion wings.
It belled a house for insects nesting
Which buzzed high praise with truth attesting.
They fed on death so like its puce;
Now it secures a fairer use:
It has become a Poet's treasure,
The reason just his wanton pleasure.
The hilly wood shows light beyond
With harmonies to correspond:
The heart, the furtherance of beauty,
Is but expression grown through duty.

THE DESERT'S REBUFF

[A Tale of Southern California.]

1

I trilled a song of laughing glee,
Then cast such wealth away from me;
For I would sing of harsher things,
The measure that a dull life brings;
For I would sing of ill and woe,
Of sorrow merged in ghastly throe.
I tuned my harp to life's distaste,
And saw beyond a sandy waste.

2

Behind me stretched the orange-trees,
Their lantern balls had failed to please;
So too date-palms aglint with mirth
Now trickling through to blossomed earth.
Behind me soared majestic peaks,
Still crowned with snow in silvered streaks,
Dissolving in the myriad rills
That splashed and foamed with gurgling trills.
Behind me was a gay plaisance,
Where gods of old might love to dance.
Before me was a desert plain,
Backed by low hills which strove in vain
To win some glory from the sun,
A burnishing to change their dun.
The giant cacti crooked gaunt arms,
Grotesquely grim, they lacked the charms
Of fancy shrubs that bloomed behind;
They seemed in truth most well designed
To match the weirdness of that place
The Eve in me so longed to trace.

THE DESERT'S REBUFF

3

I dropped my harp, with lowered head,
I wandered forth where no paths led;
For sorrow has an aimless goal,
Uncadenced by a glimpsing soul.
It turns to lead the heavy feet
A-crunching on through sizzling heat
And powdery sand curt winds toss high
To rough the skin and draw a sigh—
That only sound I was to hear
Till when—but now death seemed not near,
I toyed with death; and feared it not;
For death is cold while I was hot;
I toyed with death as might a boy
Who puffs a cheek in rude annoy;
Then runs without to nurse a hurt;
In vengeful mood to kick the dirt,
Unmindful of his polished shoes;
Until mayhap some sterner bruise
Jolts pride away and back he flies
To mother's love and watchful eyes.

4

I wished adventure, even ill,
Would flirt with death, its uncouth still.
A hush prevailed; again I sighed,
To trudge along with haste denied.
Those dismal hills receded more,
It mattered not, they held no lore,
They were of earth, the earthiest;
Beyond them were more lands unblest.
Yet drawn toward them I struggled on
With wayward thoughts I willed to con.

THE DESERT'S REBUFF

So lost in trance, my slowing gait
Disturbed me not, nor winds irate.
Most suddenly some firmer ground
Surprised my steps—a ridgy mound;
Sage brushes, dry as winter twigs,
Spread upward their distorted sprigs.

5

One hooked my skirt, I freed its hold
To hear that sound my sighs foretold:
A woeful one, there is none like,
All nature fears the poisoned strike.
A rattle chilled my very soul,
Death trapped me now, was this my goal?
A skirring ruffle louder came,
I saw a snake swell out its frame;
Its eyes caught mine in baneful dart:
I could not move, I was a part
Of sullen awe—my life had sped!
I played with death, must I now wed?
No bridesmaids by, no loving friend,
No human hand to soothe my end.
I could not move, those eyes held mine,
Inviting me with lurid shine.
An agony, past power to think,
Transfixed me by death's direful brink,
Those rising coils, dilated throat,
That flattened head I still could note:
The head drawn back to better throw
More venom in the nearing blow.
The quivering tail that faster went
Urged inner tremors dully blent

THE DESERT'S REBUFF

With helplessness. Incarnate rage!
I viewed it grow; till I could gauge
The moment now.—“O God!”—that cry
Was all of prayer. I could not die.
So saying, swayed and missed the thrust,
To soar on wings of hallowed trust.
I fled—I fled—disdaining where;
But heavy sand renewed despair.
I tripped, to fancy that the thing
Had stalked me down, I felt the sting:
It was the end, it was the strike;
But no—thank God! a yucca spike
Had ploughed my flesh—a ribboned wound—
Until, through pain, I weakly swooned.

6

I roused and felt where I was torn;
Though oozing blood is rain, not storm;
The lightning eyes had followed me,
That ghoulish snake I seemed to see.
An effort now from impish thought,
Imperilling while I was caught
In spiny lair—no cushioned place.
With ragged garb and bleeding face
I edged myself from clutching plant
To run—and run, till jubilant
I came upon a kinder soil,
One worked by man which soothed my moil.
Dark eucalyptus trees gave shade
And hid the view; till unafraid
I peered beneath a shaggy branch
To view my home—our orange ranch.

THE DESERT'S REBUFF

They waited me; who asked my cheer:
I waved a hand with vision clear.

7

In truth—in truth I wished to live,
There was a service I could give;
While human love made rich reward.
I looked above, my spirit soared:
The sky was cooled with softer tints;
For evening strayed with subtle hints
Of dawn's renewal, rosed with hope.
Near almond trees had branched a rope;
Whence petals, caught by odorous breeze
Played somersault with airy ease:
One touched my cheek in sweet caress,
Conveyed the joy all flowers confess.
My wound had ceased to trouble me,
I felt again an ancient glee.
A something sparked, I raised it now:
My golden harp! I tuned a vow
That brought surcease from vague unrest—
They waited me and life was blessed.

* * *

O God of High Endeavour
Give us true peace and power
To turn from harsh dilemma,
Eschew man's foolish hour.

The by-paths have no ending,
The way is marked and clear,
The portal of admission
Stands open and is near.

THE DESERT'S REBUFF

And trust in God revealing
Extends the realm of hope:
What prophets have discovered
Within each humble scope.

To weave a crown of glory
From thistles if no rose,
Accept the road that beckons
And alway upward goes.

This is the very meaning
Of life upon our earth,
The wisdom and concilement
That build eternal mirth.

EARTH'S MELODY

1

I lazed beneath our camphor tree,
Intent to catch earth's melody:
The buzzing sound which brings content
With colour and with odour blent,
The flit of bees, so purposeful,
Yet passed to me an easing lull.
The humming-bird's ecstatic dart
And hovering speed to win the heart
Of some fresh honeysuckle fare
Whirred music free from mundane care.
The air was weighed with heavy kiss
From orange blossoms' bridal bliss;
The chequered groves were only stayed
By guardian heights; where summer played
With winter snow whose melting brought
Fruition to a gardener's thought:
He tamed the desert to his mood;
Till southern plants with northern wooed.

2

The Ophir rose which proffered gold
Of fairer worth than mines of old;
The yucca-pointing-bayonets;
The palms with dates in clustered sets;
The pepper-trees' delicious grace,
Their ruby drops and leafy lace;
And O! A lawn serenely dear,
Unusual in an arid sphere,
Was restful while geranium bands
Reminded me of Kentish lands.

EARTH'S MELODY

Poinsettia's prideful Christmas star
Was more than bracts that glanced afar.
The past and present were entwined
With nimbused rays, and I divined
A future fitting in the scheme
Of this glad ranche's golden gleam.

3

The dartful sun held me entranced,
Rare butterflies about me danced,
My pet chameleon changed soft tints,
Discovering fresh flowery hints.
What painter's brush could wield the bright
Of sandy walk or calla's white,
The dazzle of a sprinkler's wet
Upon the long-stemmed violet?

4

I picked one now, inhaled its breath,
Beside me stood the Angel Death.
I knew not why, in that strange hour,
Doom's message went from flower to flower.
The noontide heat had drowsed the air,
And vivid sights had turned to glare.
So shortly since all nature smiled,
Felicity held me beguiled.
A dull, a withering sense of fear
Now staged itself with hazard near:
A wounded bird, not seen before,
Piped weeping notes; I laved her sore.

EARTH'S MELODY

The Angel stirred, I looked that way,
Then turned to stiffen as for fray.
The bird cheeped thanks and bravely flew,
Became a speck in ardent blue.
A sudden wind had loosed the spell,
It fluttered seeds which by me fell:
The marvel of sweet blooms to be—
Fulfilling growth so spoke to me.

5

Again I breathed the violet's charm
And from my lips there came a psalm:
Exultant as our skyey place,
Exultant as the dreams we chase;
A psalm that was in true accord
With souls released and souls that soared.

THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

Direction: *Southward*

I had a careless gift for verse, nor knew
The property that served to make it true,
That physics was the key, and then I found
How birds through space could move—assured like sound;
When rightly launched from a poet's lips,
Unflinching and firmly free from slips—
To wing their homing path while dogs unlost,
Though blizzards raged, with asking bark uptossed
Could gain direction and could fit the scheme
Of leverage beyond all chanceful dream.
For certain elemental facts made plain
The light I sought to glimpse so long in vain.
Why knew I not before that easeful speech
Could round itself to poesy through an outreach
Along the rhythmic, pulsing drifts: the spin,
The counterspin, the push, the pull which win
Solidity, and time our planet's way?
Though man may build in squares and say a say
In prose that's yard-sticked and made straight and has
No utterance beyond what's measured as
The board for box or cubicle; God speaks
With curves, four-fold dimensional: who seeks
Their end is lost in wonderment and pause.
North rounds to South and East to West and awes
The mind with magnitude of universes
Unwalled; though gemmed with orbs till each immerses

THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

In that great Spirit Source which humbles man
To nothingness or raises till he plan
Himself a place, the chiselling of some part
Divinely meant, a follower in art,
A giver to some cause, however small,
However large, so be fair dreams enthral.
North rounds to South and East to West and thus
Is metre best acquired and luminous
Its facile flow, if bards but turn to face
Earth's faring, or reverse, then stilly brace
Themselves, let tunes adventure North or South,
And should there be word-storage from the mouth
Will drop the jewelled tales, conceits that float
On bounden routes—year-lines that well denote
Proud epic, drama, not too frenzied; all
That can embrace the season's change; the fall
Of leaf, harsh winter's death, fair waking spring
And summer's bloom; but odes and songs require
Diurnal spin—to East or West desire
Directs their course on some quick, mounting flight
And dawn to dawn suffices, night to night.

Northward

A truth now flashed to me: why not before
I first felt urged to write? Then had my score
Of poor impulsing been more nearly right.
Greek plays proved what much toil had shown, the light,
The lamp of rhythmic guidance was the sun.
His movements, not our earth's, had truly spun
Their lines, or so they said; their chorus walked
To setting and to rising, often stalked
Transversely and with grace the fourfold course
Of harmony was gained: that subtle force

THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

That flutes the melody of time, and lo
The Muses danced to greet the golden Glow,
The Harpist God, the Seer; whose fiery dart
Gifts life or death, himself, as all true art,
Immune and beautiful and ever young.
The ages pass; yet is his wonder sung:
The flowers emblazon it, the beasts and birds
Chant praise; while man weaves chaplets wrought with words.

Eastward

Majestic Cytharist: I turn to you,
As Night relaxes her embrace anew,
While dawn-red draperies dissolve in day.
What saw you when you went your awesome way
Through dim unreal parts the Attic eye
Had never pierced though myths might try: reply
I beg, reply! Saw you the dread abode
As far beneath our earth as climbs your road
At nooning hour above? Saw you the souls
Your shafts mayhap have caused to join the shoals,
The myriads our eon gathers there?
Can you describe this one or that? What share,
What lot has each in all eternity?
What do they in that timeless time? Tell me
Just what forever—what forever means.
We hug our moments here, our mild routines,
A breath of being—glad or sorrowful
And then—have you no answer but the lull
Of splendour as you slowly journey on?
My gaze deflects beneath your glare, I don
A humbler attitude, would know not where
Man flits; but whence he comes. The matin air

THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

Is vibrant, filled with chirping notes, imbued
With soft persuasiveness, the gifting mood
Of the harmonic Sisters who inclined
To Hesiod, revealing much intertwined
With Chaos and immortal Love to show
The ladder of existing things. Bestow
On me more inner lore, how particles
Accrued till thinking man became, what thrills
Were his who first announced you god with chance
Submerged in law, obedient to your glance.
Great Kings, the Healer claimed descent from you,
Inspirer of bright doers, still I sue.
You pass my head, effulgence grows and all
Is bathed in light—your haloed task: how small
Is mine, although such smallness weighs on me:
To delve mole-passages—content to be.

Westward

O silent Sun: no god; but just a torch,
Complying with the cosmic scheme: you scorch
At noon; but now your tingent rays release
In us affinity to reverent peace,
A nighness to that Spirit of beyond,
The prescient Source, Sustainer, Him whose fond
Benignity is mirrored in a saintly life,
In blossomed glory and in lofty strife.
You have no choice; yet man can hear and see,
Dictate and learn to fit in his degree
As cog or obstacle within the round
Of cogent urge which leads to utmost bound;
And leave a wake of soulful purposing
For those who follow or a crooked ring

THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

That's blurred with midnight folly, stays the wise
Repairing this or that and so denies
The glory of what might have been. Is there
A sadder end? But you, O Sun, forbear
To lend an ear, although I drink your gleams
And Beauty's quest may lead to more than seems.
The warrior's joy or dragging step, the work
That lacks, the selfish wills, the heavy irk
Of sullen minds, the rebel tongues, the noise,
The smoke, the dust, the mire; mechanic toys;
The gimcracks that can scarcely feed the soul;—
Yet glancing through the sign of God's control.
You dim—a student lights his lamp, intent
To seek a betterment, a nurse has bent
To sooth her patient's brow, and prayers ascend
And holy contemplation lifts the end
To a fulfilling height; for backward look
Has shown a little less unkind the book
That man to-day inscribes, recording much
Of good with much of ill and alway such
A wealth of longing hope.—I lift my arm
In "Ave!" Now O Sun: Night like a psalm
Of restfulness descends. I point to glints
From many stars, and subtly rise new hints.
The fourfold movement of my arm is tuned
As is the planet's course and so are booned
The parts that make the whole of everything.
Sweet music is the pulsing force—the ring
That curves the year, the ring that curves each day,
The ring of skyward progress and God's way.

THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

Eastward

But as I shift position the moves I make
Reverse their rhythm: so must one's balance take
The music of the spheres for words to dance
Their sequent route unfolding like a trance.
Once more I face the East presenting hope
Of morrow's coming light and thus I grope
Adown the centuries to Orient far,
For us more nearly west, to where the Star,
The Chinese Sage, preached middle course and knew
Of music's power to hail the way that grew
From even trend and harmony; and then
That Indian beggar, still beyond our ken,
Content beneath the branching Bo to use
One string, one rhythm, and humbly thus to muse
Till thoughts incurved to nought and pale desire
For nullity erased old woe and ire;
Till cadenced tunes with discord ceased to be.
Wise Prophets listened, heard Divinity
In fires, in clouds and on the mountain top:
Stern poetry released became the prop
To skyish burgeoning. Some thirty years
Of pleased obedience—and then the Spheres
Themselves were harkeners to One who spoke
For only three; but gentleness awoke
With mild submission and a way was shown
Euphonic, potent as the Master's own.
Behold: in grand crescendo, Truth uplifts,
Sublimity and Vision proffer gifts.

PERFECT SPIRIT

Lovely in your promise as a bud unfolding,
Lovely in your self as rose just blown,
Ever gracious, all that's true and good upholding,
Perfect Spirit, have you really flown?

Must I live alone these many arid morrows,
Void of blissful hope together spanned,
Hope of service through assuaging dearth and sorrows,
Hope of golden deeds together planned?

No, for heavy, mourning weeds I twist asunder,
Struggle from the clouds that thicken round,
Close my ears to ther unholy, woeful thunder,
Rise again to life from grief unbound.

Perfect Spirit, now I know that you are near me,
In your radiant calm I rest content,
Trustng in your love to guard and help and steer me,
Till I too have climbed life's high ascent.

GOD UNDERSTOOD

I reached a balmy wood;
Then breathed the air
And it was good.

O God of glad desire:
Pray give me peace
To string my lyre.

Tranquility I ask,
Unteased by moil,
To end my task.

I rested in the wood,
Calm cloistered me—
God understood.

BEYOND HIS KEN

He told us of the Universe,
Dilated on the stars,
Explaining this, explaining that;
Still failed to solve the whole.

Confessing that he knew no more,
He quoted from an ode:
The human mind perplexed him too—
How tuned the listening Soul.

APOLLO'S PARTING GIFT

Though branches barred my way: above I saw
The marvel of a world beyond all dream;
Mist palaces by lakes of turquoise gleam
Where masted pleasure craft could idly draw;
Refulgent cliffs, mauve seas of vasty awe;
And aureate coves which caught the lessened beam
Of the great golden god, whose hymn supreme
Inspirits us and gives us rhythmic law.

I gazed quite lost in thought till darkness fell,
The glory and the glow had dimmed away;
But still through dusky height there sheened a road,
A trail of arrowed fire, a mystic spell
Inspiring me. I plucked a pallid spray
Of sweet nocturnal bloom—then hummed an ode.

TO THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

Shining Mountains! stalwart Mountains!
Heights that hold divine acclaim,
Heights whose snow sublimates the summer,
Cold—yet born of living flame:

Flame that flashes from the sunset,
Flame that flashes from the dawn,
Soul of all creation's morrow
From our past revealing drawn:

Give to us ennobling vision,
Power beyond this heavy now,
Power to delve with holy passion,
Power to keep one's highest vow.

Shed your lustre on our striving
Till each heart attain to love,
Fervent love and true ascension
Glimpsed through peaks that point above.

McGILL UNIVERSITY
Undergraduate
Library



