

The Iroquois Enjoy  
A Perfect Day

A Chance Meeting

Other Poems

By

AMY REDPATH RODDICK



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*Lady Roddick*



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THE IROQUOIS ENJOY  
A PERFECT DAY

A CHANCE MEETING

AND

OTHER POEMS

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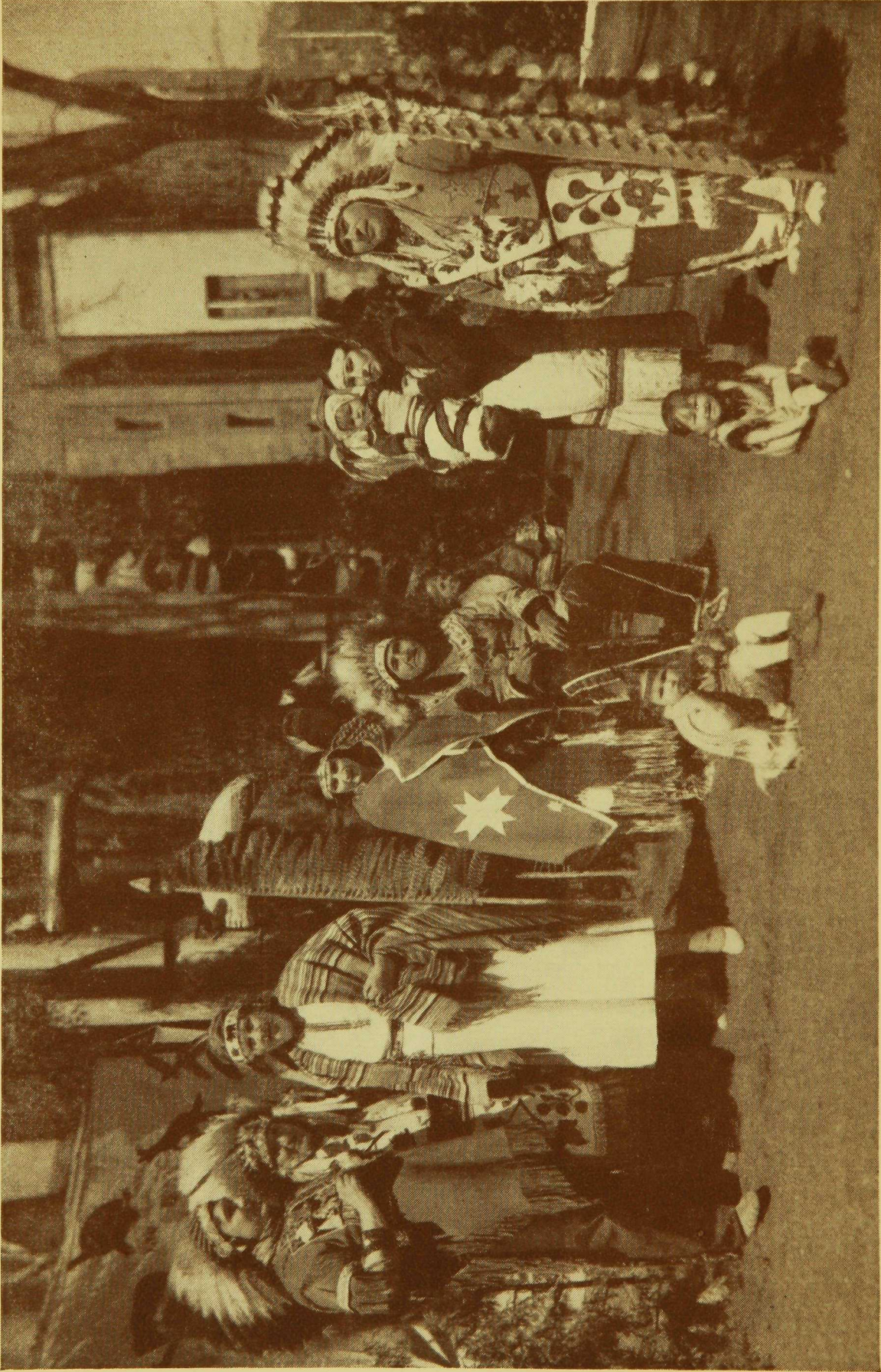


PHOTO BY A. D. WOODMAN

CHIEF POKING FIRE

CHIEF  
WOLVERINE

HEAD MATRON OF BEAR  
CLAN, WHO GAVE HER  
NAME TO LADY RODDICK

PRINCESS  
KAWENNAROROKS  
(LADY RODDICK)

GRAND  
CHIEF

MAYOR OF  
CAUGHNAWAGA



The Iroquois Enjoy a Perfect Day  
A Chance Meeting

AND

Other Poems

By

LADY RODDICK

*Princess Kawennarorok̄s of the Iroquois*

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# THE IROQUOIS ENJOY A PERFECT DAY

## FOREWORD

At Sunrise and at Sunset

each Chief always repeated this prayer to his people.

It was chanted by all at Lady Roddick's adoption ceremony when the Sacrificial Medicine was stirred and the Pipe of Peace smoked.

Great Heart of God, heal my heart  
Wounded it is and sore,  
Burdens and fears oppress me  
I need Thee more and more,  
Lead me and I am stronger,  
Light the road we plod,  
Hold me and draw us closer,  
Close to the Heart of the Great White Spirit.

Seria so wa nen Niio, se tsent na kwe ri  
io ka re wa ton, io non wakte  
iok ste tie iot te ron te wa ka kwa ta  
se hon—ko ia ti skas sen ha onen  
Ta ke nen stien, en ke sa ste ke sen ha  
Sa ha se ron ni, tsi non ni ia kwes  
Ta kwa ie na Tsia tak ta. Se ria saktha.  
Ta kwen te ron, Niio.

Before this great ceremony of affiliation of our dear friend, Lady Roddick, into our tribe—our thoughts were clouded, we dared not mention a name that would not be appropriate to our esteem of her person.

We discussed among us, till late, still no one could say an answer. Then I said we leave it to the Great Spirit. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon of Dec. 8th, 1938 our beloved friend arrived with her friends, we commenced our ceremony, and the matrons of the tribe uttered in a low voice: *What shall we call her?* We all looked at each other. After our adoption song: *O tsi na ren ta*, I said to my people, I will give her my own name, *Ka wen na ro roks*. I saw in their eyes, they were all very pleased, all of them, even the chiefs.

Then we ate the corn soup, our sister *Ka wen na ro roks*, had stirred for us, since she is one of us now.

Aug. 24th., 1939, at the opening of the Long House, her gift to us.

In return she received her native dress.

Our fires had been extinguished so many winters out in the open.

Now she has lighted again in our long house the fires of the Six Clans.

She lit our fire of the Bears, she became Head Matron meaning Princess of the Bear clan.

Her wampun belt was put over her shoulder as the chiefs wear theirs.

She stirred the corn soup and gave to all of us meaning from now on she is one of us for ever.

Caughnawaga,  
November, 1939.

ROWIS KAWENNAROROKS  
Wife of Chief Poking Fire.

# THE IROQUOIS ENJOY A PERFECT DAY

*(And I with them)*

What is this pride that swells within my breast?  
By full adoption rites I claim descent  
From those who lorded first in this fair isle;  
And now, where once the corn outstretched afar  
From ancient Hochelaga's high stockades,  
The tomtom sounds; and, on our lawn, the past  
Reverberates anew. How paintable!  
How colourful! How sentient the scene!  
A city's might is round about, sky-scrappers  
Not far away.—Our grass and trees are, though,  
An oasis for picturesque display:  
The teepee and the totem sign assert  
Their pledge—the soup-pot hanging as of yore;  
And here and there, uniting and dissolving,  
Kaleidoscopic groups, most fanciful,  
Yet blanching not beneath the sunlight glare,  
Build history; and gaping citizens,  
Of French or English birth, acknowledge that  
A vista opens out—compatriots,  
So much ignored, are theirs to know and prize.

## THE IROQUOIS ENJOY A PERFECT DAY

Two hundred and some forty odd all told  
In powwow dress—the Indians are more  
Than guests—they are at home. The daffodils  
May look inquiringly; but trilliums,  
Transplanted from the woods to waken robins  
Amid our shrubs, while, in chaste ecstasy  
They silently applaud, now almost quiver—  
They catch the noiseless tread of moccasins.  
Would that our ground could be released from bondage  
To lose itself in forest majesty;  
Where God reveals himself in secret ways,  
And nature's artistry holds thought in awe.  
But no; the present clouds that luminance;  
We live shut in by doors whose keys are turned,  
Through cracks alone we peep. Like dandelions  
That flaunt their gold and too assertive sparrows  
From Europe come, we chase wild things away.

To-day—enough! Enjoy this interlude:  
The Iroquois is picnicking and we  
With him. Few tulips have fulfilled their glory.  
Unmissed the show for tulip-coloured figures  
Make rings upon the grass: they sit at ease  
And lunch with appetite well whetted by  
A cooling breeze: the feathered Chiefs and Braves  
Resplendent in ornately beaded buckskin;  
The matrons, shawled with modest art, their earrings,  
Arm-bands and necklets fashioned from odd trophies.  
Some faces gaze with mother-love upon  
The carven boards whence patient, black eyes peep.  
The maidens—how describe their vivid charm?  
So lythe, so coyly sweet, so to one's taste,  
Let us forgive those few who wear high heels  
And weaken to the lip stick's luring carmine.



*THE IROQUOIS ENJOY A PERFECT DAY*

The snow-shoe left unstacked when roads are cleared,  
The cabin stove's enticing warmth have paled  
The Redman. See him though, when torrid suns  
Have done their painting work, and maple leaves  
Torch wonder in this Canada of ours.  
Just now the trees but push a dainty promise  
Of summer's luxury. They surely seem  
To be a fitting canopy of hope  
For these young warriors; who play with bow  
And tomahawk for sport alone; who eat  
Beside their elders with a grave decorum.

But listen! Shake off sloth—the drum is calling:  
Festivity beats in its buoyant sound.  
With scrambling rush, we hasten to obey;  
We are beholden to a kindly neighbour  
Whose property is well invaded now.  
In rows and rows upon the grassy slope,  
Behind our joining lawns, gay figures tier.  
A gorgeous pageantry that carries back  
And back until surroundings disappear;  
'The watching throngs that press without are shades.  
What has that dunnish audience to do  
With this reality that has alone  
Accepted me? For in its midst I sit,  
My hairband eagle-feathered, round my shoulders,  
The ceremonial shawl. The dance we view  
Is full of meaning, clamped with rhythmic poise;  
Each action speaks, the depths of feeling stir  
Until the king-hymn ends it all, the why  
That we are here. The cameras obstruct,  
We know the passing moment writes itself  
In history. The shadows grow distinct.

## THE IROQUOIS ENJOY A PERFECT DAY

They have recording power. As we start up  
And stroll about and talk and form a tableau  
To demonstrate how we must later stand,  
The wireless voice entraps our doings, to spread  
Them round the world. How wonderful is life!

Tea-hour and a chilly wind unite  
To tempt us in the house, the dining rooms  
Upstairs and down, the big, old-fashioned kitchen  
Re-echo with the sound of Iroquois  
And English intermixed: was ever such  
A party! Who indeed is happiest,  
The Redskin or the White? A friendship so  
Cemented will I trust endure, become  
A lasting heritage in days to be.

And now we have a while to spare before  
The great event, and thus we saunter out  
Again. Whom have we here? The Pastor first;  
Whose ready ear and quick response delight  
His flock. Benignity enables him  
To balance well his counsel, pleasing all.  
The Black Robe seems essential to the scene:  
The Jesuit has conquered in the end.  
Quite close to him is Grand Chief Pull-it-over,  
More widely known as Pete Delisle; who tends  
Postoffice work so faithfully that those,  
Desirous to glean more about old ways,  
The habits of his race, to tap his fount  
Of ancient learning, find themselves rebuffed.  
His only holiday at seeding time;  
And wisdom in the choice for one who loves  
The soil. His native eloquence has raised  
Him high in Indian affairs. We give

## THE IROQUOIS ENJOY A PERFECT DAY

Him utmost credit, guarding as he does  
Tradition's mighty voice; yet aiding with  
All diligence a changed condition's need.  
Here is his doughty son, elected mayor  
Of Caughnawaga, much embarrassed by  
A rival faction—naughty politics  
May bear the blame. The opposition group,  
On this heraldic day, when royalties  
Become democracy's ambassadors,  
Is quartered on Victoria Square, beneath  
The statue of the Sovereign; who gave  
The treaty rights that some would have restored,  
And some disdain. Shall then the Indian  
Be Indian a hundred years from now?  
Or shall he be the White-Man's replica?  
I think old ways are best for those whose souls  
Are steeped in poetry, whose hands obey  
The artist's urge, who are inheritors  
Of gifts the townsman views but mistily.

And who is this excelling one, whose headdress  
Cascades behind, who bears the feathered staff,  
That erst scalp-wand, announcer of prestige,  
Who cuts a figure, who is everywhere?  
It is Chief Poking Fire, Manager  
And Man of Medicine. To him is due  
Our most successful day—we owe him thanks.  
He even rose at dawn to pull the firs  
That made the glossy, scarlet trucks a dream  
Of joy, eliciting loud plaudits as  
They passed through crowded streets, themselves as filled  
With living freight. And thus the Indians  
Arrived in happy concord with a sky

*THE IROQUOIS ENJOY A PERFECT DAY*

Of deep, unfretted blue. I raised my hand  
In salutation: "Se kon se wa kwe kon."  
Was on my lips, a welcome to each one.  
The day was young—they stayed nine hours, and not  
A dullish moment marred their course. Much praise  
To Princess Gathering Words, this Chief's fond wife.  
She is admired by all, so sweet her presence.  
Her honoured name is also mine to boast:  
Kawennaroroks of the Bear, we both  
Can sign; but she with insight that escapes  
My reach. From babyhood the Indian voice  
Has prompted her. I catch alone its echo;  
Yet, even so, I feel myself akin.  
Her husband's clever hand has captured her  
In wood, her prettiness defies his knife,  
Her quick divinement, though, one can perceive.  
And this is Walking Sky, their charming son,  
Whose skill in sport on manufactured snow  
Has won the plaudits of New York, who has  
Been chased for autographs in London, Paris;  
In Brussels and elsewhere; who is a dancer,  
A singer—truth to tell what Indian  
Is not? For rhythm is emotion's outlet,  
And he is artist to the very core.  
The children dance with true dramatic gestures;  
Slow steps increase to spinning warmth, a tale  
Is often told thereby. Just watch that youth,  
Young Deer, fur-capped and dressed most scantily.  
Unshod and belled, he is a Medicine Man,  
One conjured up, no doubt, from long-house days.  
He twirls his cloak—there's music in his movement,  
Although he's walking now. And see: he dons  
A mask that is grotesquely wonderful.

## THE IROQUOIS ENJOY A PERFECT DAY

Delicious ugliness is often blent  
With humour, even adds a zest to grace;  
And so they whirl and posture and sit still,  
And natural whichever way it is.

Addressing brawny Chief White Swan, he hops  
And skips away as agile as the rest;  
Though age has ploughed its criss-cross marks, each has  
A genial slant. He is at one with life—  
Would rather give than sell. He silences  
The theories and the isms of our world;  
For poverty disdained compares with wealth.  
Has he not feet to pivot on? Why he  
Can posture stealthily or leap about  
And play the drum and sing, all at  
The selfsame time. Just let a Pale Face try!  
Has he not hands that fashion iron-wood bows  
Or rattles from the cocoanut or gourd  
Or what you will? And smiles begetting smiles,  
He is unconsciously a benefactor.

So many Indians! How then portray  
Them all? The eldest is Chief Wolverine;  
Who sits and thinks, and what he utters comes  
From ninety years of living on this earth;  
Respectfully we welcome him among us.  
The youngest is this wee papoose; whose eyes  
Hold two months' wonder in their depth, and what  
It sees to-day a mother's crooning voice  
May later songfully repeat; until  
A growing child can boast it too has witnessed  
The Great White Father pass on Sherbrooke Street.

## THE IROQUOIS ENJOY A PERFECT DAY

For this event have come New Brunswick Micmacs  
A lengthy venture from their home. Both Chiefs  
Disport the treaty medals picturing  
King George, the third. In wearing them they honour  
King George, the sixth, so soon approaching us.  
Most solemnly they walk apart; not one  
Of us can speak their tongue; and half-learned English  
Seems more a stumbling-block than a conveyer  
Of what an Indian holds in his heart.  
From nearer parts of Canada are Mohawks;  
And from the great Republic to our South  
Some Senecas, intent to catch a sight  
Of the descendant of those British kings  
With whom their storied Chiefs were once allied.  
And here is an Abenaki herb-doctor  
Without his tribal buckskin—lent and not  
Returned. He has a portly mien and talks  
Vivaciously to an indulgent Mounty,  
Prescribing for a cold of lengthy tenure.  
We are indeed most well policed by friends  
In uniform and otherwise, charmed with  
Our play as we; while tactfully they fend  
Us from the eager zest of lookers-on—  
A tireless crowd, romantic to the core.

Asudden, though, the people thin; backs turn  
To us, and necks crane streetward as a lull  
Of heavy expectation settles down.  
Quite silently we find our places, make  
A living picture as before—no prompting  
Is needed now; once told an Indian,  
Be he child or man, forgets it not.  
Above us proudly wave some Union Jacks,

## *THE IROQUOIS ENJOY A PERFECT DAY*

French flags as well and my own Maple Leaf  
That blazons Canada. And what is this  
That challenges the questioner? It is  
The standard of the Iroquois, the oldest  
Existant League of Nations in the world,  
And it is North American. Perhaps  
Its influence, in some mysterious way,  
Explains the why of peace, that strengthens as  
The years go by, on our great Continent.  
First Mohawks and Oneidas, Onandagas,  
Cayugas, Senacas, then Tuscaroras  
Together smoked the feathered calumet,  
Made laws of such outstanding worth they bound  
The tribes as one. So now the French and English  
And all the babbling tongues that scatter discord  
In Europe, here consort with friendliness.

Behold! We are arranged atop the steps:  
The Priest, some relatives with me, and lower,  
Outstretching on the balustrades and banks  
And gravel walks, are massed the Indians  
In serried rows of true barbaric splendour.  
How rare a sight in our metropolis!  
Two striking banners are unfurled which, held  
Aloft, display a glad assurance. "We,  
The children of ancient Hochelaga, welcome  
Our Great White Father and Mother." So it reads.  
Some guests and my dear household, all agog,  
Are stationed in the windows overhead.  
Attention! Chiefs and Braves have crossed their arms,  
The herald-cycles noisily announce  
A near approach, preceded by hussars,  
Familiar through their daily practising,  
Resplendent in their black and yellow trappings.

*THE IROQUOIS ENJOY A PERFECT DAY*

The trot of horses gives a gala sense;  
But now a motor slows, Chief Poking Fire  
Has raised the ermined Pipe of Peace; and puffs  
Of circling incense-clouds are volumed forth.  
A king, in simple majesty, salutes;  
A smiling Queen looks fixedly, then turns  
To look again: her glance has gathered us.  
And they have passed; while we most solemnly  
Have gazed in stoic calm.—Another motor,  
Our Premier leans and waves to us! and we  
Wave back—dispersing now. Thus ends  
The climax of our day: the King and Queen  
Have passed. We wish them both a dear adieu,  
And may they soon return to pleasure us.

Onen wathwa non we ra ton.  
Se ni non ti io.  
Akwa on kwe ria sa kwe kon.

Now you are departing,  
Great White Father and Mother,  
From the depth of our hearts we bid you farewell.

So say the Iroquois; and I with them.

---



A CHANCE MEETING



# A CHANCE MEETING

On the first warm day of the year 62 A.D.

Rome.

## THE PERSONS

A GREEK, *personal Slave to Seneca.*  
His ASSISTANT, *under Slave to same.*  
A TRAVELLER.  
SENECA, *Prime Minister to Nero.*  
EPICTETUS, *a Boy Slave.*  
LITTER BEARERS, and ATTENDANTS.

---

SCENE—In front of the Temple of Virtue.

*A litter, decorated with silver and richly cushioned, stands at the left, beside the steps on which loll the crimson-liveried Bearers, leaning against the balustrade surmounted by a statue of the Goddess.*

*The Greek and his Assistant are tossing coins.*

## A CHANCE MEETING

*Greek.* Heads or ships our Master comes before  
Sun-rays have touched your nose with added burn.

*Enter Traveller, left, quite confused.*

*Traveller.* Have I turned stupidly astray? But no,  
The back and front just do not correspond.  
Inquiring, I was told the fane was Honour's,  
And it was thus insculpted—little chance  
Of error there; yet, though I closely hugged  
The building as I went, I hap upon  
Illusion, this façade that is unmatching.  
A temple wafted off, another takes  
Its place—that is as clear as mud to me,  
No further light. Explain it, if you can,  
Why Honour holds a cornucopia,  
Is not so firmly pedestalled, so full  
Of action nathless. It is Virtue, who  
Is statued there in regal pomp; and this,  
Her dear abode.

*Greek.* Then why not seek admittance.  
Dissolve perplexity through one who is  
A child of Truth, transcendent in her might?

*Traveller.* The time is unpropitious: mountain-bred,  
This too insurgent heat, my winter cloak  
Forbid the forced endurance she exacts.  
Besides a start once made should be continued.  
Bright Honour was the first to beckon me,  
And I will find her shrine.

*Greek.* The goddess willing;  
Retrace your steps and ferret out some crack  
To cranny through. If you succeed, return,  
Announce your news that others may do like.

*[Exit Traveller, left.]*

## A CHANCE MEETING

Now heads or ships he shuffles back before  
Ourselves depart. [*Tossing coin.*] Where has the coin gone  
spinning?

No matter, let it lie: some beggar's find.  
My pouch is overburdened as it is;  
For slavery and dearth are wide apart  
With Seneca as master. Just the same  
He dallies overlong. Siesta time  
Has cleared the street and left an emptiness  
'That makes me yawn—no cookshop near at hand.  
I never knew our Lord engaged with lesser  
Divinity before. Philosophers  
Are mighty in themselves, and so subserve  
Alone the highest gods. These others are  
Poetic figments to their soaring minds.  
'Personification' is the rightful term.

*Assistant.* What Greek, be he a slave or prideful lord,  
Is ever at a loss for words? A rustic,  
I flounder in an argument; but am  
Well pleased to worship where the State decrees,  
And Priests give evidence. I'll not discard  
A single god, nor run the risk of losing  
A worthwhile benefit thereby.—But look!  
He comes, distraught as when he left. And now—

*Re-enter Traveller, right, closely eyeing the temple. He slips and falls heavily where water has been spilt and dust is turned to mud.*

*Greek.* The Honour-seeker comes to grief, as one  
Might well expect. A lesson learnt. Let us  
Though lend our aid. He struggles to arise.

*Traveller.* Confusion worse confounded! Am I whole  
Or all amuddle like that tiresome building?

## A CHANCE MEETING

Is it enchantment? How have I escaped  
A broken bone or two? But see my cloak  
Befouled with mire: myself most sadly bruised.  
What evil eye has darted noxious rays  
On me? An inauspicious quest to end  
In such a plight. Have you no dusting cloth  
To wipe at least my hands?

*Greek.* [*Handing him one.*] How pitiful  
To seek a toga sphered with golden stars,  
Attain instead mud splotches on a cloak  
No longer new. The spattering will dry  
In course of time; but it will leave a mark  
Of doleful consequence. Are you not now  
Inclined to mend a shattered purpose through  
A meek obeisance to chaste Virtue there?  
Perhaps your cloak might sooner cleanse, if you  
Implored one garmented in spotless white.

*Traveller.* So may it be. Apollo too could help.  
Permit me then to spread the cloak upon  
Your litter shafts. [*Placing it.*] An urge bids me accept  
Advice, explore within. Might it not be  
One temple serves the twain, two goddesses  
Are worshiped in the same august abode?

*Greek.* By Pollux now, your guess is close; who built  
The fanes had that in mind. Thus Claudius  
Marcellus planned until a famous augur  
Predicted lasting enmity between  
The two Divinities if housed together.  
Their queendoms must be separate. In fine  
Each has her edifice; but, to approach  
The splendent temple of illusive Honour,  
One passes first through that of thrifty Virtue.  
Deep meditation helps the votary  
And stern resolve.

## A CHANCE MEETING

*Traveller.* A lengthy process it  
Would seem, your litter gone on my return,  
And I left wrap-less. No, I'll rest upon  
These steps and nurse the aching parts of me.  
A little gossip might contribute to  
The cure. Tell me, you learned Slave, has he  
Who centres now the universe; who is  
The Caesar of to-day; who deems himself  
The first of poets—ardour and rolling eyes  
And all the spendthrift feelings intertwined;  
Who is the arbiter of life and death;  
Who is the mime of his own moods alone,  
Though flatterers may choose the mask he wears;  
Tell me, has he made sacrifice before  
Immortal Virtue here? Does he restrict  
His conduct to undevious behests?  
Do flagrant orgies and morality  
Accord?

*Greek.* Beware! Our Roman walls have ears,  
And speech is wafted far through secret channels  
But known to few. A stranger, even one  
As insignificant as you, might well  
Be apprehended.

*Traveller.* [*Looking round.*] None are lurking near.  
And you seem well disposed. Believing that,  
I'll sing the praise of purple-togaed Nero,  
A prince of profligates, the people love  
Him well and flock to games and spectacles.  
Amused and fed—what need they more? Hail Caesar!  
Now for my question, I will substitute  
A courtier for the courted—a sycophant  
Who wallows in the mire of luxury,  
A rich Augustan, honoured I've no doubt.  
Know you of one who takes his counsel here?

## A CHANCE MEETING

Again I'll change my query. Through a friend  
I found a lodgement, suiting my slim pouch  
But not my taste, in that Trans-Tiber part  
Where open space is formed by lanes and courts  
Round which the riffraff mostly hive in cells;  
Whose linking galleries tier high. As through  
The wiles of Juno I was led today  
To this great imaged Virtue, yesternoon  
My steps were drawn across a narrow passage,  
Then by some labyrinthine ways I came  
Upon a tiny house; where several entered.  
On hearing an exhortive voice I trailed  
Within. A small, old man held forth on virtue,  
With urgent charm and rich delivery.  
We, seated on the floor, felt pangs and cheer  
And were most loath to leave; though what it all  
Portended, I, for one, was not quite sure.  
But he who spoke, in virtue, loomed above  
His fellow-citizens, or so his band  
Of rapt adherents vouched. Is he then honoured?  
He is in bondage waiting Caesar's judgment,  
The suit too unimportant for a high  
Officialdom to lend a ready ear.

*Greek.* What is his name? This paragon of yours.

*Traveller.* They call him simply Paul: a Jew from

Tarsus,

Well read in what pertains to the strict law  
Of his own race, he now upholds the cult  
That it has blossomed forth, a flower whose fragrance  
He proffers to the world, and almost whips  
The issue with most dire foreboding should  
It be refused.

*Greek.* A Christian, I surmise.

They are not backward in their witnessing,



## A CHANCE MEETING

They hold most staunchly to their faith and we—  
I wonder. How I wish our Master would  
Appear. If yawns could only summon him;  
I yawn—and yawn. But now I think of it  
Is he not virtuous? Has he not honour?  
Who has not heard of Seneca? What slave  
Would not expose his very life for him?  
In wealth he seconds Caesar. Clearly he  
Is first in brilliancy of diction; yes,  
My Friend, in high superlatives, true virtue  
And honour can combine. Your argument  
Has fallen to the ground.

*Traveller.* And you are right.

I had not thought of Seneca, and now  
I thank Fortuna for this happy chance  
Of seeing one so much revered, so much  
Before the public eye. It is indeed  
A privilege, will be a traveller's tale  
On my return; yet even as I speak  
A rumour jogs my mind that touches him  
Of late: his hands hold not so steadily  
The reins that pupil Nero jerks and strains  
With his mad coursing.

*Greek.* Silence! Have a care!  
He comes. If you desire to see, remain  
Unseen. Step there aside.

*Enter Seneca, descending the temple steps. He leans on the arm of an Attendant and is followed by others.*

*Seneca.* Go, Greek, within.  
And quickly intercept a youthful slave  
Who stood apart as I passed out. He limps,

## A CHANCE MEETING

And has a museful look as though he plumbed  
Life's destiny. Bid him attend me now.—

[*Exit Greek up temple steps.*  
*Re-enter Greek, accompanied by Epictetus.*

Come hither, boy. Your face seems quite familiar.  
Where have we met and when? Enlighten me.

*Epictetus.* Great Seneca has deigned to notice one  
Who is responsive as a spirit-slave  
Might be to some dear lord among the shades;  
Who feels a weight of gratitude that gives  
A sweet emotion quite at variance  
With Stoic calm. — I kneel to kiss the feet  
Of Seneca, divinity on earth.

*Seneca.* Rise, Boy, I recognize there is a tie,  
Just what escapes my mind.

*Epictetus.* A year ago  
You banqueted with that most powerful freedman  
Epaphroditus, court librarian.  
And there, discoursing, your choice words awoke  
Such kindly turmoil in my breast, I listened,  
As in a dream, forgetting humble tasks,  
Forgetting all but what touched both our souls:  
I, little more than child, still one that thought,  
And you, admittedly the most admired  
Of Stoics.

*Seneca.* Boy, I now remember well;  
Can see the scene. I spoke facetiously  
To match the bacchanalian mood of those  
About: then suddenly I noticed eyes  
That seized on mine. I, Seneca, became  
The captive of a young slave-child. I talked  
Across the couches with uplifted thought.

## A CHANCE MEETING

The matter might be general, and was  
Applauded; but its undercurrent passed  
Alone from me to him. The company  
Had faded from my view. An old man gave  
As best he could a legacy of fond  
Advice to one beginning life. He felt  
In some odd way an heir was born to him  
That day.

*Epictetus.* Such condescension, Lord, is past  
Belief. I fancied at the time the gods  
Were kind to me. Through mighty Seneca  
They spoke, and I was let to gather crumbs  
Of an ambrosial feast; whose fullest flavour  
Was certainly for those of proud renown  
And most exalted parentage, not for  
The least of slaves; and, even thus, for never  
Could I dream those truths were arrowed just  
At me, I was enchanted, soared from earth  
And soaring broke the valuable I held.  
A smash and all was changed—no Stoic I.

*Seneca.* What then occurred disclosed your measure's  
worth.

Epaphroditus flamed with wrath, no doubt  
Ignited first and fanned by my remarks;  
That lacked the tactful prompting one should set  
Where pleasure rules and wisdom is disdained.  
It is indeed a parlous bridge that spans  
Divergent waters.—Yes, he ordered guards  
To lead you forth and twist your healthy leg  
Until you waddled duck-wise. Such a gait  
Would match your open-mouthed expression, so  
He said. Did you appeal, make cringing cries  
For mercy, act the child and wring your hands?

## A CHANCE MEETING

You simply said: "Let that be done. I will  
Henceforward have more chance to prove that flesh  
Defects count little in the scheme of things,  
That will is power." These true and noble words  
Affected all, a solemn silence fell.

I spoke, a clement audience gave ear:  
Your master seized my point: where was the need  
For futile punishment? Precocity  
Like yours deserved a kinder fate, should be  
Developed by good Stoic teaching; till,  
In course of time, a slave so erudite  
Would bring renown to one whose property  
He was. Glib sayings, too, that seem to drop  
With easy grace from lordly lips are often  
The find of those in bondage. Then the market  
Had lately shown a dearth of slaves who cared  
For scrolls or understood their tabulation.  
Why, Boy, I made your merit quite apparent.  
That was enough.

*Epictetus.* You armoured me with courage,  
You paved a golden way.

*Seneca.* Your road was mapped  
By Destiny; but not for reminiscence  
Did I demand your presence here. A query,  
That you alone can answer, was the cause.  
At Honour's portal, in the fane above,  
You stood quite hesitant, afraid to enter,  
And this before a curious trend of mind,  
An ardour for old worshipping led me  
Within. Again, on my return, I fancied  
'That Janus prodded you uncertainly,  
You moved and then retreated. Why, I ask,  
Did you spurn Honour thus? Be truthful, Boy.

## A CHANCE MEETING

*Epictetus.* Can one relive experience and be  
Quite sure? The inner strings that pull our actions  
Are difficult to verify; and yet,  
Lord, I will try. I dreamt of Honour, saw men  
Bend low, obeying my behests; and I  
Was gratified. I took some steps as though  
To capture sweet results; then stopped—I was  
A slave: sour grapes came to my mind; a slave  
And honour, well, I would forego what was  
Impossible to grasp. I sank quite lost  
In reverie; until a train of clients  
Announced some Presence. Lord, it was yourself,  
So soul-inspiring! You, whose condescension  
Had made on me an impress, deep as life.  
Could I not build on such a strong foundation  
A future, fitting dreams and aspirations?  
I pictured now a freedman that I might  
Become, attracting scholars from afar  
To hear my learned utterance. Perhaps  
Their tablets might entrap some maximed thought  
The centuries would guard—and then—and then—

*Seneca.* What happened then?

*Epictetus.* I pray you, Lord, desist.  
Your probing tortures me. A slave's reflections  
Have little worth. His outlook is too narrow  
To trouble an ascendent mind.

*Seneca.* But I  
Would know the further why.

*Epictetus.* I am confused:  
Ideas come, ideas go. I would  
Not willingly displease a benefactor  
Whom I revere.

*Seneca.* Cease fearing. Tell the truth.  
What harm will then accrue?

## A CHANCE MEETING

*Epictetus.*                      Again I looked  
At noble Seneca. He had returned  
From visiting within: his gait had slowed  
Which boded not a heart at perfect ease.  
Could Goddess Honour be unkind to one  
Whom I had ever thought her favorite?  
Yet none is proof against a railing whisper:  
Who gazes on the peaks can vision might  
And glory if himself be so adjusted.  
If not, he measures by his low estate,  
And self-made mists deflect the splendour round.  
How often jealous rumour swallows what  
Is unsurpassed? Are courts not perilous?  
The lesser evil not the maximum  
Of good is all that even a most wise  
Philosopher can hope to mould in ours.  
He steadies as he can, sees through possessions  
To truths beyond. Still there be some who ask  
How wealth, exceeding almost Caesar's own,  
Could be acquired. High usury is hinted  
That cripples provinces. Lies, lies and lies  
Not openly expressed. Deserving honour,  
The gift is his in fulness running over:  
What spills alone is food for scandalmongers,  
And thus it is—stern Virtue is within  
The reach of those who strain sufficiently;  
But Honour is a point of view, is just  
What others think—I went no further then;  
For I would rather live in cold seclusion  
Unfretted by an audience.

*Seneca.*                      Boy, Boy,  
I answer you with sighs. Perhaps I envy  
Your unprovided youth, your straight assurance,  
The future that no outward storm can damp.  
Responsibilities weigh deeply—those  
You lack—I feel a weakness—Greek, assist  
Me to my litter.

A C H A N C E M E E T I N G

*Greek.* [*Helping him.*] Lord, you sway. Have care!  
You stood too long beneath the burning sun  
In happy wilfulness, forgetting time.

Ah now you strengthen! Thank the gods!

*Attendants.*

Yes, thank

The gods. We could not spare our Seneca,  
A god himself.

*Seneca.* [*Entering litter.*] What rag is trespassing?  
Remove it, pray.

*Traveller.* [*Taking his cloak.*] An indiscretion, Lord,  
I humbly beg your mercy.

*Seneca.* Who are you?

A spy? The city teems with them.

*Traveller.*

No, Lord,

A traveller; who, aiming high, fell flat  
And mired the cloak, left on those shafts to dry.  
Your most august compassion may be tried,  
I trust it suffers me to go unscathed;  
However, I have heard enough to take  
A reprimand from you in kindly part.

*Seneca.* What have you heard?

*Traveller.*

The most illustrious

In Rome has given proof of his true worth:  
Divinity conversing with a slave—  
But truth to tell I am at sea as far  
As Honour is concerned. Its wanton search  
Has landed me in mild disaster—hence  
A shabbier cloak.

*Seneca.* What brought you to our city?

*Traveller.* To find demerit. Gossip sang its evils:  
Bright carnivals of gay unrighteousness.  
The Empire of the world that held mankind  
Was dyed with scarlet sin; and I would shock  
Myself somewhat, run riot for a while,  
Win laurels with pursed lips on my return,

## A CHANCE MEETING

Describing scenes of revelry and vice  
Bemuddled by deep draughts from Circe's cup.  
Instead I have been gulfed in virtue, so  
To speak. No more a whited sepulchre,  
I am unlike my former self; yet what  
I am exactly time alone will tell.  
First Paul of Tarsus, then great Seneca  
And this young slave have shaken what was me.  
I swim in virtue; yet I see no shore  
In sight when Honour is debarred. But now,  
I well remember, Paul exhorted us  
To think of others, do kind deeds; the mind  
A blank as far as Honour is concerned;  
And so it goes.

*Seneca.* Pray tell me is the Paul  
You speak about a prisoner who has  
Appealed to Caesar?

*Traveller.* Is great Seneca  
Omnipotent? His view extends afar.  
What mighty Lord but he would recognize  
A slave whose halting steps have scarcely passed  
Life's threshold; would inquire about an old,  
Decrepit preacher of a sect whose tenets  
Dispute the right of our ancestral gods?  
Yes, Lord, he is the same.

*Seneca.* Where does he dwell?  
It was my gentle brother Gallio,  
Proconsul of Acheia, who was called  
Upon to judge between disputing Jews.  
He would not act; it was a case of faith,  
And no misconduct mentioned. Who complains  
Of that in our most lenient Rome? The matter  
Should certainly have dropped. The prisoner,  
However, as a Roman citizen,



## A CHANCE MEETING

Made an appeal, an incident too trifling  
To carry to my ears; but that a slave,  
A Thessalonian, despatched a few  
Excerpts from an epistle by this Paul  
To one who was my brother's chief accountant.  
They noticed some similitude with lines  
Of mine and thus the facts were passed to me.  
You whet my interest. Give me his direction.  
I might help him, and he—who knows?—who knows?

*Traveller.* The way is too confused for me to say;  
But I could find again the small, hired house.

*Seneca.* Go Greek, accompany this friend of ours,  
Supply his wants; a fine, new cloak the first  
Of gifts. Greet Paul from me, announce my wish  
To visit him, enjoy fraternal converse  
Tomorrow at an early hour.

*Greek.* He lives  
In the Trans-Tiber part, provocative  
Of every ill. Be careful, Lord, your person  
Is precious, should be guarded from adventure.

*Seneca.* Ill smells can be endured, my litter can  
Be kept from jostling crowds; but now I long  
For food and rest. Come, Friends, we will away.

[*Exeunt all but Greek, Traveller and Epictetus.*]

*Traveller.* I stiffen with surprise to think that I  
Have really met and talked with Seneca;  
That he is human like our humble selves,  
Withal so generous and kind; and you,  
Good Greek, seem almost now an intimate.  
But what of this young slave? Will he not go  
With us in search of Paul? Perhaps imbibe  
Some added eloquence to help his rich  
Discernment.

*Epictetus.* Stoics frown on rhetoric.

## A CHANCE MEETING

Calm reason, not persuasive verbiage  
Is what they aim to reach. Besides, the doctrine  
That Paul espouses is unsound. It builds  
On tales of Galilean fisher folk,  
And is most detrimental to the State.  
I'll none of it. If only that great teacher,  
Musonius Rufus, were in Rome, I'd run  
To him unprompted, beg some crumbs of wisdom.  
I picture him returned from banishment,  
Me nestled at his feet with ears attent.  
O would that he were here. Desire is wrong.  
I am unfledged as yet; but with his help  
I might in truth aspire to cynic heights.

*Traveller.* And stumble like myself.

*Epictetus.* Alas! You may  
Be right. This foolish talk forgetting time  
Has almost tripped me now. I bid you both  
A fond farewell. I must be off or brave  
A harsh rebuke. [*Exit.*

*Greek.* A most astounding boy:  
And one deserving praise.

*Traveller.* And steadier  
In an obedience to Stoic law  
Than even princely Seneca. He seems  
More sure.

*Greek.* That is the arrogance of youth,  
Disdaining what he does not know. Our Lord,  
My master, has most wide horizons:  
The waves grow rough, and he must tack.

*Traveller.* But Paul  
Is old and yet he steers a starry course.  
He rides eternity, his views extend  
From bliss to its abysmal opposite;  
He asks his listeners to think and choose.  
Let us now go to him—walk warily.

[*Exeunt.*

AND  
OTHER POEMS



## SO CAME A SONG

I was ensconsed on Fancy's wing,  
A child again, where fairies cling;  
    When through fanned air I met a dream  
    Ethereal as a lunar beam;  
Yet somehow it appeared to string  
A message of faint imaging,  
A figment of a cloudy thing;  
    Till on a pale, poetic stream  
I was ensconsed.

A lull disclosed a mystic ring  
That caused my lips to slowly sing;  
    From chaos now there shot a gleam,  
    The prelude of a higher theme:  
On cradling light the Muses fling  
I was ensconsed.

## SNOW-BLOSSOMS

April 2nd, 1939.

Here's April, cloaked in snowy loveliness;  
And I would have her so. Let others fret:  
They sigh for summer's charm, the soft caress  
Of winds perfumed with rose and violet.  
And if these joys were theirs a fiery sun  
Might sap in part the zest of colder climes:  
The languid play of brilliant tints, that run  
Through all the spectrum hues, may tire at times;  
But not this white sufficiency, so short  
Its mystic hour. A bride has donned her veil.  
The sky, in mauvine-grey, has dipped to court  
An earth, unearthly, glamorous and pale.  
Just yesterday the naked branches meshed,  
Unbuddingly against a surly height:  
Today each bough is freighted and refreshed  
With flaky blobs that blossom sheer delight.  
Such curious flowers, some lotus-like and some  
The ghost affinities of blooms long since:  
This orchid-lipped, and that most surely come  
From gala-grounds of an Iranian Prince.  
Astounding trees that flank a noble church,  
Moon-lit, electric-rayed for evening draws.  
What scientist could cull through his research  
A fitting term for what thus overawes?

*S N O W - B L O S S O M S*

Trees grown from mounded drifts, unfleckt and pure,  
Sublimier than the verdure Eden knew,  
Trees bent beneath their vestal garniture,  
So chaste they might well line an avenue  
Of spirit access to the vast beyond.

White, white and white and purity the text:  
The Preacher may enlarge with thoughts once conned,  
But I make reverence now, I have annexed  
A pearl of price to memory's lustrous chain.

Tomorrow these strange flowers will lightly fall,  
More lightly still in solemn dreams they'll reign  
Until Death's chill, then may they wreathe my pall,  
For I would die when winter curtains earth,  
And all is quelled beneath its pallid sway,  
A symbol of that rest; whose latent mirth  
Is nurtured in a peace beyond decay.

## ON THE TABLETS OF MEMORY

*P. W. R.*

When Genius dies in youth with wings unspread  
Then is our world a bleak and surly one,  
Devoid of hope and that celestial sun  
That shines in splendour on a haloed head.  
What might have been is not, and joy has fled:  
Such beauty, such nobility begun  
Should have a golden noon; yet there is none,  
And night, descending, helps to weep the dead.

A solemn hour has run its woeful course:  
To deputize for him might light the dawn,  
To signify assent to his dear plans,  
To imitate; though with a lesser force.  
The mourner draws a breath—no sorrow's pawn  
Who carves a way till earth with heaven spans.



ON THE TABLETS OF MEMORY

J. C. R.

Indwelling poetry shone from his face,  
A fitting mate in some sweet, sylvan nook:  
Enough of joy without the slender book  
Of Keats' *Endymion* whose words would lace  
With all the fragrance round and then embrace  
The gods of old, their musings unforsook,  
And dreamings of our day, the lovely look  
Of him who read aloud with eager grace.

Too much amaze and rapturous accord  
To dure through hoary times. The sky grew dim,  
The chaste Diana sank in drear eclipse;  
And night unstarred itself: a soul had soared:  
A playmate, helpmate! Who was like to him?  
What wealth of thought had flowed from his dear lips!

## TWO ANNIVERSARIES OF ARMISTICE DAY

The tenth, a Sunday.

I watched beside my own dear graves  
Till came a shrilling whistle's cry:  
All else had stilled unless a plane  
That, flag-bedeckt, droned far on high.

A squirrel jumped, with beady eyes  
It queried why the sudden pause;  
Then stayed itself as though it knew  
There was a deep impelling cause.

As though it knew a decade since  
A shout went forth from land to land:  
The cannon's mouth had ceased to belch,  
Peace torched to us, and war was banned.

Still peace builds not so peacefully,  
And customs change and change about,  
And selfishness bestrides old truth—  
Subdual—while ill passions flout.

But then this pause—remembrance winds  
Past sacrifice with dreams to be.  
O God! Could only hearts expand  
And could they all for aye agree.

To-day the heaven blues with calm,  
The churches hold the gathering throngs,  
A liturgy of grace ascends:  
The cenotaph may blossom songs.

*TWO ANNIVERSARIES*

The twentieth, a Friday

Now, through a window I look East,  
Called by a gun's arrestive sound:  
Two minutes' pause again is ours  
To plumb the depths of the profound;

To cover four long years of war  
And all the severance thereby;  
To pray for multitudes of souls;  
To hush the grievance and the sigh.

And puzzlement is in the pause:  
How short a time for listening thought,  
The gathering of Almighty plan  
Till faintly though, a tune is caught.

The bugles blast a waking note,  
The whys and wherefores drop from me.  
Accepting this, accepting that,  
I raise my head and further see.

Unbright the day; but not unkind,  
No tear for a new holocaust:  
A talk has eased an anxious while,  
And amity is not yet lost.

These twenty years have promptive use;  
While here and there is vigilance  
Since that eleventh hour when hope  
Perhaps unsteadied with its trance.

## MONTREAL

O Montreal! You dream of cities!  
Both water-girt and mountain-crowned;  
Proclaimed at first through holy vision,  
That brightened most when rigours frowned.

With prayerful zest they dared the ocean:  
Those missionaries we hallow now;  
The Governor and Nurse and Teacher,  
The Farmer serving with his plough.

O Town of Mary! Sweet adventure!  
Proud Montreal owes life to you  
With streets and monuments outspreading  
From once a fort, a Hôtel Dieu.

If later came a new allegiance,  
French monies changed to pounds and pence,  
A treasured culture still continued,  
The Redcoat aiding its defence.

O Montreal! Two peoples hail you:  
Sustaining you, they pay a debt,  
Bi-storied as converging rivers,  
One-hearted as those rivers met.

Then others, too, who sought asylum,  
Have found in you a proved content.  
If there be sorry souls and wilful  
A brother's hand may heal dissent.

*M O N T R E A L*

O scenic City! How we love you,  
In mantling white or arboured green.  
The rush and heavy boom of traffic  
Are stayed at times by your serene.

In blissful parlance we remember  
Famed deeds that torched through cloudy throe;  
And as our mountain cross illumines  
May further efforts add their glow.

## WHEN CHAMBERLAIN FLEW

I live in dreamy vigilance apart  
From sad mismatch and jar of warring wills,  
From propagandic stupor that instils  
The same emotion flashed from heart to heart.  
They voice one thought; and fear is in the mart  
As in the council hall; the soldier drills:  
War, war; perplexities; dismay that fills  
Or high or low with its invading dart.

Then, suddenly, there glints a ray of peace:  
A Flyer dares the clouds and meets who might  
Have been an enemy—hand touches hand.  
Now Four, in solemn conclave, sign surcease  
Of turmoil: hope, increasing, stays despite;  
And could, with gentle guidance, bless each land.

## AT THE HEIGHT OF AN EPIDEMIC

[Between boat-landing and train-leaving,  
shortly before sanitation had stamped out  
yellow-fever in Vera Cruz.]

The town was jaundiced with an air of doom  
For yellow-fever placards patched their gloom  
On lowly homes and those that were more high;  
Though all seemed level to the traveller's eye.  
Dust spiralled messages of dust to be  
In teasing with a sad delinquency:  
Cohereless particles, freed from some whole,  
Gave evidence of death's distorting toll.  
Infinitude of dust—thus much I saw  
Where winds tore down a street of lethal awe.  
No movement else unless with laggard glide  
A bald-necked buzzard dipped, as though it tried  
To hide its raffish work of scavenging,  
Its grim voraciousness beneath a swing  
Of wieldy grace that should have wafted it  
To mountain fastnesses; but no, it lit  
Beside an open drain, that sharply cut  
The road in lengthwise halves, a place to strut,  
With food of easy fetching, food that none  
But it would raven for. Above the sun  
Smiled acquiescence: Providence is wise.  
Tastes vary. In diversity there lies  
The riddle of creation's lastingness,  
The balance that accords with rhythmic stress.

## AT THE HEIGHT OF AN EPIDEMIC

Dust! Dust! And more if buzzards were averse  
To pickings that for man spread direful curse.  
Unspeakings, though companioned, soon was reached  
A pleasant plaza where a stillness preached  
Of what I failed to fully grasp. There were  
Some benches placed beneath a tropic blur  
Of tangly green suggesting that we rest;  
While disinfectant whiffs gave their attest  
Mosquitoes would not lightly penetrate  
The searching odour round, nor felly sate  
Themselves, dispersing tragedy behind.  
So in this verdant nook that was designed  
To please nomadic wish we sat, not quite  
At ease, may be; yet with a forced delight  
We let our eyes dwell on a noted church,  
Both domed and towered, become an age-old perch  
For buzzards—buzzards everywhere—no end  
To them. Why should this fane so condescend?  
The spirelets, tipped sombrero-like, each had  
A bird engaged in solemn conclave, sad  
Or just uncaring for the sky was blue.  
The dome cross had its three, the tower, but two.  
Another now flopped down, each cross had three.  
O City of the True Cross! Can it be  
That buzzards are the victors? Man enmeshed  
In what he scarcely knows: corn grown and threshed.  
Food! Food! Dust! Dust! Deliverance in death.  
Was this the utmost of us all, a waning breath?  
Now through blank silence rolled a lumbering cart,  
Some refuse spilled, down dropped with facile dart  
Converging carrion-lovers, glad to stuff  
Themselves as best they could. Enough! Enough!



*A T T H E H E I G H T O F A N E P I D E M I C*

A cloud of flies upsurged—away we sped;  
Train time was near. We'd leave this town of dread.  
A backward glance revealed the crosses freed:  
God save the fevered souls in their grim need.

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And later, tuberoses bunching in our hands,  
A fragrance seemed to steal that understands  
The sordidness of life, and sees beyond:  
Quintessence of all Love might then be conned.

## THE LASTING WREATH

I frowned upon Eraser Time that mocks  
    Not just futility; but laudful might,  
    That robs the halo of its torching light,  
Hides good with ill deep in oblivion's box.  
Unmindful who, in careless mood, unlocks  
    Some gallant deed of old, some lofty flight  
    Of genius; but to mar through arrant sight,  
Let slip the rose to treasure thorny stocks.

I flouted time with its incessant tick,  
    Till towers be levelled to the dust beneath,  
Till empires fall; and others rise in power.  
I flouted time and left those gone to quick  
    Themselves with timelessness, thus gain the wreath  
Accorded them in God's unfettered hour.

## SPIRIT CONVERSE

In reading of my ancestors, I thought  
    Had I been gifted with the tools of grace  
    I'd build an airy palace as a place  
Of spirit converse, one that is inwrought  
With pearls of truth and gems of wisdom caught  
    From out the past. More fine than spidery lace  
    Inscriptions where unbodied souls might trace  
Their earthy pilgrimage, the dreams they taught.

So could I learn and give some pleasure too  
    To those progenitors from whom I come.  
Is there a road by rhythm's dulcet lanes  
Where speech can thitherward ascend and sue  
    For answering regard? Is there a crumb  
Of sustenance from far-off astral planes?

## ABOVE A PRECIPICE

In a dream that was austerely proud,  
    Apart from life's emolument and thirst,  
    From sights of jocund mirth and those accursed,  
I stood upon a ledge where mists enshroud.  
No sound could pierce my ear however loud,  
    So tensely was I now in thought immersed:  
    Which step would deathward lead or which, reversed,  
Would give earth's privilege? My head was bowed.

And now oppressive clouds had thinned enough  
    To show the chasmy depth, its ugly yawn.  
I pushed myself with tottery force to where  
The ground seemed steadier, the foothold tough.  
    Tears gushed appeasingly; till then undrawn:  
The song of destiny was passing fair.

## THE CORE

When I am no more here, where am I then?  
    Drawn in this verse I tune with easy grace?  
    So easily it seems I have no place  
Beside the marvels of a richer pen.  
Or live I in the hearts of fellow men?  
    But how? When those beloved have left their trace  
    On higher heights than I could ever face  
And feel indulgent worth beyond earth's ken.

The living with the dead keep vigil now,  
    Caught in the storage of a quiet mind;  
Whose still defies recording time's onthrust,  
Whose dominance refutes the wondering how,  
    Dissolves complexity—life's multirind—  
To bare the spirit's core through subtle trust.

## MY LYRE

I play my Lyre, till sweet expressions come  
    That else were left, submerged in nothingness;  
My strings are five—four fingers and a thumb  
    Are brought to bear on them, or more or less.  
Myself is real, that I truly feel;  
    But not my instrument, it is of air.  
Blood courses through my veins—I seek appeal  
    With sounds that drift from an unsounded where.  
O Lyre, more precious than if made of gold,  
    Invisible to all but bardic eyes:  
The singer keys his voice and dreams unfold  
    Of tender impulse gleaned from laugh or sighs.  
A whispered word, a glance that speaks of much,  
    A flower that gently peers through melting snow,  
An act deserving homage, hopes we clutch,  
    Desire augmenting from a long ago:  
Excitements these that would have no contour  
    If nursed unprompted by the swelling strains;  
That lyricize and help unbar the door  
    To secret prospects and aerial gains.  
Beyond, beyond, for chords vibrate anew:  
    Profundity has opened out to them.  
The rapturous assault of heights pursue  
    A harmony that is a requiem;  
Shorn of lament, providing blissful calm,  
    A fragrant breath that perfumes all the past,  
Unveils a luminance and tunes a psalm  
    Of dear surprise with fecund wonders cast.

*M Y L Y R E*

The pallid Dead—not so, for still they are,  
The marvel of their nearness yet is mine.  
O holy Lyre, soliciting afar;  
Until I garner Love—myself indign.

## OCTOBER

When gay October smokes the pipe of peace  
And wafts its incense through the stilly air,  
So lightly that it frees from all caprice  
Of gone-by days with skies more azure fair:  
Then is the heart attent with holy truce,  
Suggestive of the stay there is between  
The summer sun's too vigorous misuse  
Of candent darts and winter's blasting spleen.  
A fragrance well discerned through smoky whiffs  
Amassing in a mist of lazy cheer;  
So much a part of autumn woods one sniffs  
The painted leafage soon becoming sere.  
The splash of maples in their powwow trim,  
Surpassed but by the sumac's graceful show,  
Intones from here and there a rufous hymn  
That pridefully is laden with their glow.  
The bronze of oaks and yellow birchen notes  
And lilac green, refusing to grow dun,  
Add lure and mystery; and skyward floats  
The chorus of rare tints together spun.  
Though sugar times have passed, and virent June  
Is but a memory—its dainty flowers  
And July's richer wares caught in a tune  
Long sung; though willow weeds have whiled  
their hours,  
Though golden rods now offer greyish wool;  
Still asters zigzag in their elfish way,  
And nuts entice the picker, and the full  
Of nature's charm is in its fall display.



## ON A SOUTHERN SOJOURN

I sigh for tunes that bring renewal back  
    Of our ecstatic Northern Lands in spring;  
    When timely in their trills the robins ring  
The pooling songs that lilt in winter's track.  
What does the summer-nursing South now lack,  
    As free from Boreas, its glossed leaves cling  
    With their eternal harping notes that sing,  
Though varied, yet but one symposiack?

A rampant gorgeousness is its to know,  
    The lazy luxury of azure days,  
A mystic somnolence that weighs the air,  
An odd enchantment whence proud lyrics flow  
    Abundantly; and still, I miss the lays  
Of snow-escaping blooms—to me more fair.

## MY MONTREAL

My Montreal—not of today;  
But when the sleigh-bells tuned the sky,  
Gave music to each glancing ray  
That gemmed the snow; then left to lie  
In soft and deep accordancy  
With winter's prodigal desire.  
The tinglish air was light with glee:  
It laved a world in pure attire.  
The spacious homes in garden-plots  
And here and there a fair plaisance  
Belched little smoke—when came sad blots,  
A pallid storm renewed romance.  
For that is how I think of you,  
My Montreal of long ago:  
Our town progresses—that is true—  
But lost the whiteness of the snow.

## THE VICTORIA RIFLES' BAND

[A New-Year's serenade.]

In bed, I conjured former New-Year's eves:  
One at a ball when "Auld Lang Syne" pealed forth,  
While we joined hands as year lapsed into year;  
One on a train in a flowered, southern land  
Where light airs laved my face, and rumbling wheels  
Chimed in with eager time made manifest.  
How many though, at the assertive hour,  
Escaped from me in unrecording sleep;  
Unless a merriment of tooting horns,  
Of noisy cries without, awoke enough  
Acknowledgement to let a wish slip through  
My lips or an old slackness ask a new  
Adventuring. Then this and that portrayed  
More clarity; until my mind went back  
To those excelling ones, on our return  
To Canada from snowless Christmasses  
Abroad, which had their regnant charm; but lacked  
The soft, white drifts of wonderment that made  
Of Montreal a fairy scene, a place  
Of crystal magic.

Tired with day-long sport,  
We children slept, lost to the dying year;

*THE VICTORIA RIFLES' BAND*

But in most holy keep; undreaming till  
Reality made dull the dreams that might  
Have been. We woke deliciously alive  
To music's flooding lustiness. Yes, yes!  
The serenading band was here, had not  
Forgotten us—the trombones, cornets, fifes  
And best of all that deep, resounding drum.  
Soon wrapped and shod, we rushed pell-mell to peer  
Through frosty panes. Or snow fell paddingly  
Or moons regaled the eye—it mattered not:  
The gas-lamp set them forth—those martial forms—  
With just a hint of mystery to serve  
The trysting hour. Pale rays played lovingly  
About the sonorous brass now turned to gold  
That poesied to us beyond the sounds  
We truly heard. Enchantment reigned as tune  
Dissolved in tune: then came a silence filled  
With melody as proud. Our clock struck twelve ,  
Light streamed from out our porch, the doors were  
open,  
And in the doughty bandsmen trooped, and we  
Could picture all. Our Father giving each  
The cordial hand of welcome, wishes heard  
On every side, repeated and repeated  
Until ourselves took up the strain as we  
Were put once more to bed; but could we rest?  
Impossible! When fancy played with such  
Ado. Our nurse had gone. The darkness weighed.  
Secretively we searched for gowns and slippers,  
Stole down two flights of stairs, none noticing.

## THE VICTORIA RIFLES' BAND

Beneath Apollo, with his dancing Hours,  
So largely figured in the hall below,  
Huge instruments were stacked that made of men  
His firm adherents, though, perhaps unknowing  
His name. The god of music charioted  
Aurora-ward in painted silence there.  
Not so, his votaries; whose talk, full-toned  
And jocular, whose catching spurts of laughter  
Responded to their Major's courtly lead.  
Our Father's guests they were—the table drawn out  
To banquet size. The doors ajar we gazed  
Our fill; then turned to view the giant drum.  
Dared we? But yes—indeed we forced a noise:  
A monstrous trumpet edged and clattering fell;  
A din to raise the dead—a pause ensued.  
Transfixed, we could not fly; for there, alert  
With dignity, the prideful Bandmaster stood.  
O joyed surprise! His face showed no displeasure;  
It bulged with smiles. He stooped and took  
Each tiny hand in his, politely gave  
The season's wish. How royally wonderful!  
Such condescension from so great a person:  
Then once again we were swept back to bed.

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But hark! The cuckoo raps out blythfully  
Its twelve quick notes, the hall-clock chimes and booms  
Twelve times, and "nineteen hundred and thirty-nine"  
Is ushered in with a most sabbath calm.

*THE VICTORIA RIFLES' BAND*

The wand of Somnus touches me; my world  
Has backward slipped or forward: either way  
A happy New-Year echoes from a dream.







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