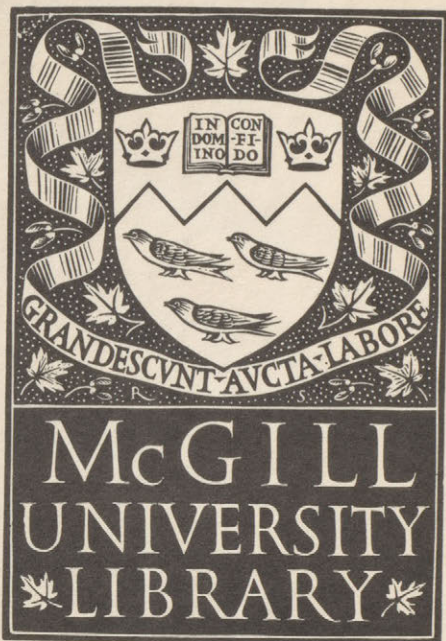


The Glowing Years



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THE GLOWING YEARS

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Modern Canadian Poetry (edited) 1930

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Dollard, A Tale in Verse, 1933

Ode on the Death of George V, 1936

THE GLOWING YEARS

By

Nathaniel A. Benson

nadian

TORONTO

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. LYRICS - - - - -	1
II. SONNETS - - - - -	27
III. REALITIES - - - - -	59
IV. SONNETS TO ELEANOR - - - - -	89
V. ODES AND ELEGIES - - - - -	101
VI. TRANSLATIONS - - - - -	127

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C. A. A.

I
LYRICS

VISION

I stood alone at sunset
On the shore of the Western Sea
And a path of blood-red gold and fire
Swept shining up to me.

Two oceans lay before me;
Below, the moveless blue,
Above, the Golden Ocean
With fire-isles burning through.

All sky and sea were glowing
With that strange light which gleams
Over the cloud-roofed kingdoms
Of deep ancestral dreams.

Those Islands of the Sunset,
The Far Hesperides
Ablaze with wild and perilous flame—
What dreams arise from these!

HERITAGE

Wayfarer of the years, I walked
Upon the most mysterious road,
Where men of aim and purpose talked,
Of common sense, the spirit's goad.

Little they left me as they went,
And only Love unfettered me;
Reason slow-earned was strangely spent,—
Now I am happy, I am free.

Somewhere a whistle in the mist
Down the dim path my ancients knew,
A hand of magic on my wrist
And in my heart a whispered rue;

I turned me from the travelled way
And in a silent forest found
A cabin never built by day
That slept upon enchanted ground.

Within I went, and finger-tips
Were on the wide sill of my mind,
While wonder trembled on my lips
At age-old voices in the wind.

Beyond a glassless window burned
A light of blue on some far hill,
And I was glad that I had turned
Back to the Folk who knew me still.

THE KISS

The moon's pale silver seemed that night
A stream from Paradise,
A kindred river of strange light
Homing toward your deep eyes.

Soft as the midnight wind your face,
And shadow-dark your hair,
Your hands were fairies winged with grace
White in the darkness there.

Downward I bent—as with no sound
That silver river slips,—
And in the perfect silence found
The moonlight on your lips.

TO EMMA

Her hair is dark, yet light as foam,
Her eyes are dancing deeps of heaven,
And sent to shield her, from their home
Come saints and angels seven.

Her laughter sings the brooks away,
Her smile the dwelling-place of mirth,
Her words are sweet, for round them play
Twin rosebuds come to birth.

Her cheeks are lilies flushed by dawn,
Her ears are peeping coral buds,
Her touch so softly given and gone
Like wind in April woods.

All these conspire within her kiss
That well might animate a stone;
But her best virtue lies in this:
Her love is mine alone.

WHITE BIRCH

Beside a lake that mirrored deep
Its sister-heaven, robed in sleep,
I saw the slim white birches stand
Like virgins in a lonely land
Who wandered lovely, long ago,
Once when the forest slept in snow,
And when the Spring returned they were
White birches in the April air.

The lake was whispering to them still
Of days they danced each emerald hill,
When rapids sang in tossing foam
Before the tepees of their home,
Where camp-fires winked with ruddy light
At silver stars that filled the night,
When ancient words of love were said
As Autumn turned the maples red.

Above the birches, strongly set
The great dark pine-trees guard them yet,
Like swarthy braves whose love remains
Through ruthless snows and stinging rains—
And though I play the poet's part,
I take the pine-tree's truth to heart,
And stand on silent watch above
The white-birch-thought of thee, my love.

THE GIFT OF LIFE

Let the past as twilight be,
Sorrows all be dead;
Let the dawn for you and me
Lift a lovelier head.

Never anguish pressed the heart,
Never beauty died,
But their fair immortal part
Lived on, sanctified.

So, when shines the morning star,
Griefs pass hence and home,
And from sorrows, streaming far,
Perfect song shall come.

Time and tears our portion seem,
But, all these above,
Wakes one truth like April dream:
Out of life comes love.

THE SOLITARY

I came one day to Bradford
With August in the air;
The flowers danced like fairies
And nodded everywhere.

Above me elm and maple
Were arching low in green,
And from an emerald hill-top
A low red spire was seen,
Half-hidden in the green.

In every hedge and garden
Bright buds and blossoms sweet
Clothed the still vale with magic
For Fancy's wandering feet.

There, far away to southward
Lay counties blue, and cloud;
The silence of late summer,
The golden farmlands proud,
The wind no longer loud.

I wandered through the village
By narrow leaf-lulled ways,
By garden, tree and cottage
With none to tell their praise.

On hills the grain lay golden,
The pear-tree's branch hung low;
It seemed I trod a highway
I walked on footsteps slow
With one, so long ago

The wind and I were poets,
And once we sang of dawn,
And sang of one so lovely
Forever, ever gone.

THE ROBIN

Dark was the dawn, and cold the stars
And sorrow lay, a cloak, on me
When suddenly, like God's own voice,
I heard a robin on his tree.

Singing the dark that would be dawn,
The winter's sorrow turned to spring,
He stirred in me, my dreams long fled,
Some unsuspected joyous thing.

He sang that nameless deathless joy,
The mystery in the soul of man,
The hope that burgeons into song
By some divine eternal plan.

Silence—and once again there came
That flash of song against the night,
A candle of courageous dreams
Touching the sombre world with light.

Come life and death, whatever will,
Come sacred love or searing pain,
I still shall hear the longest day
The robin singing in the rain.

And I shall feel that man was made
Of earth, save that immortal part
That stilling grief, remembers love,
A robin singing in the heart.

THE RIVER GARDEN

Here in this dreamful, deep-enchanted ground,
A seeming island washed long leagues away,
Borne in the moonlight's ocean without sound
Unto a shore of neither night nor day,
Wonder comes home unto the listening heart,
Rapturous quiet, and a spread of wings.
Here there awakens the immortal part,
The mystery come of unfamiliar things
Made one with us at last.

Now, burning slow,
The dim strange altar-fires of some fair past
Rekindle in my eyes their ancient glow:
The intangible remembrance of the last
Sweet hour of moonlight on a yestereve,
Where Youth and Life and Love raised up again
Their triple torch of beauty—and did leave,
Each walking in a radiant violet rain.

I see them come once more with soundless tread
From the deep shade: Youth stainless yet and strong,
Love with white rosebuds round her golden head,
And Life who knows no ecstasy is long.
Here all the shapes of Xanadu are free,
And fairies circle on a fresh Herne Hill,
Here walk once-parted lovers joyously
And ivied casements open to the still
Strange song that moonlight sings through all the
world
From quiet, haunted halls of brooding Night.
Here phantom hosts' pale banners are unfurled

And every drowsy flower drinks the white
Slim chalice of cool silver flowing far,
A wine no earthly grape may ever know,
A nectar glassed in some immense blue star
Whose berries are as drops of mountain snow.

That cup a hand from Heaven tenders me;
Some Hebe, yet invisible and sweet,
Now floating earthward, gently renders me
A slave before my Fancy's sandalled feet.—
You are that Hebe, maiden to the host
Of high Olympus, lovely at my side,
A most unreal and ever-smiling ghost
Whose footsteps flash, and whose white fingers guide
My heart and soul, my yearning, questing dreams
Above the earth, and unto rest above
The leaves low-murmuring in the moonlight-beams
Of ultimate fulfillment, and of love.

LYRIC FOR ELEANORA

I

Her spirit like the sea unmoved
Is richly quiet, still, and deep ;
A lovely heart that never loved
And innocent as infants' sleep,
A voice so sweet the moon must weep
Her diamond drops of dewy light
As unheard whispers gently creep
To give all earth the mild delight
Of murmurous melody and magic in the night.

II

The southern seas, the summer skies
Would mirror each in brighter blue,
If they might borrow of her eyes
Their radiance of light and hue,
Whose depths the silent angels strew
With sheen of silver from each star,
With brilliance known unto the few
Who see the moon-maids' floating car
Paving the violet waves with foam of jewels afar.

III

The fairies spun each flawless thread
Of luminous and aery gold
That crowns her glorious goddess-head
With beauty never truly told,

Wherein the wanton winds make bold
In gentle play about her face,
And, when departing, seem to hold
Within their wings a fragrant grace,
Drawn of that haloed joy which they may not displace.

IV

Her cheek enfolds the rosied tints
That never palest roses bore,
The tender flush that sunrise prints
On buds it never blessed before,
A blending of the bounteous store
Of nature's rich yet faintest flame,
That drifting isles of dawn adore,
That fades as swiftly as it came
Leaving a dream of light, a colour none may name.

V

So fair is she that never word
Might tell the beauty that she bears,
That poet's hymn was never heard
To weave the wonder that she wears;
She is the yield of all the years
God passed in glory's fashioning,
So lovely that her precious tears
In falling make fresh violets spring
Denying earth has borne a purer, lovelier thing.

TO THE SINGER AWAKENED

(FOR BLISS CARMAN)

When April turns her footsteps north
To wake the land and sea again,
A youthful princess wandering forth,
Waving her silver veils of rain,
When April journeys north this year,
Her gentlest lover will not hear.

And when she treads with footsteps white
Across the hillside where he sleeps,
Will we not hear her pipings light
Stopped for a moment as she weeps,
To feel those songs to which she thrilled
Are quiet, and forever stilled?

There, where the river of his dreams
Goes rolling by his place of rest,
Will April hush her singing streams,
Her youthful winds' divine unrest
And whisper: "Gently, gently move
And waken not my truest love?"

Nay, for a wanderer will come
Youthful and slim, with tossing hair
To lead his lady April home
And with her wake the meadows there,
At twilight and in dawn's pale gold
To walk with April as of old.

BALLADE FOR YOUTH

Waste not the space of youth's sweet day
On learning, books, and wrinkled thought.
Live every minute blithe and gay,
And let it be with fancies fraught,
For all the truth the sages sought
And wisdom's treasure all-divine,
All joys that ancient days have wrought
Live only in Love's rubied wine!

Let not youth's hour, grown dull and gray,
By sombre Sorrow's glance be caught,
With every fragrance fled away
And woe the purchase pleasure bought,
And pain the rack remembrance brought,
And Grief the guest who comes to dine—
All raptures for which youth has fought
Live only in Love's rubied wine!

Gather the brightest buds ye may
And bear away the blooms ye ought,
To-morrow never spares to-day,
Time's mercy is in vain besought;
Pick flowers that are, ere they are not,
Let no ungathered blossom pine,
For all the glories time begot
Live only in Love's rubied wine!

L'ENVOI

For pale remorse give not a jot,
Make every passing pleasure thine,
The best of life's delights, God wot,
Live only in Love's rubied wine!

SPRING

Spring sweeps her world-wide emerald wave
Across bare fields and barren hearts,
And spring will heal whom none may save
With secret rapture of her arts.

She sees on earth, her vernal globe,
Her blithesome singing legions go,
And from the folds of her fresh robe
Shakes bud and leaf on lands below.

Spring breaks in white across the boughs
A foam of many blossoms bright,
And glory dwells upon her brows
In fresher stars that jewel the night.

Spring wakes, and earth so still before
Wanders in silver veils of rain,
But spring will waken nevermore
Wild April in my heart again.

SONG OF THE EXILES

Come to the window at sunset
Come to the window with me;
Let us challenge the flaming sunset
And its marvellous mystery.

Arms clasped round at the window,
We shall sail our dreams from sight
And drown in that golden ocean,
In those shimmering leagues of light.

Beyond those strange horizons
A thousand thousand miles,
We shall wander the purple valleys
Of the glowing farthest isles.

These be the islands of magic
That we see in our earthly dreams;
From these we have wandered as strangers,
Remembering incredible gleams.

These be the golden islands
For which we have yearned and yearned,
As exiles longing for homeland
Seaward in sorrow have turned.

These are the storied kingdoms
From which the stars' pale light
Beckons the pallid signal
Of beacons that burn by night.

There walk the hidden beauties
That kindle our earth-bound eyes,
That have left us friendless and lonely
And strangers beneath all skies,

For we are the exiles who wander
And wonder amazed on the earth
At the lands that lie in the sunset,
That we knew before our birth.

From that haven lost yet shining
I hear the singing of streams,
And the golden surf's wild glory
Resounds on the beach of dreams.

THE POET

He is a pilgrim robed in gray
On never-ending quest,
Who knows not happiness by day
Nor in the night knows rest.

The future corridored for him
With statues of the past
Where tender dreams are deeds grown grim,
Dreams far too dear to last.

The ships sail in, the ships sail out,
His heart's sad harbour stands,
And vacantly must stand without
Those ever-vanished hands.

His stars are suns of magic glow,
Of one wild moment's heat;
The nights, a deep abyss below
His unreturning feet.

He gives the gift of all his heart,
A bauble, it is taken;
Now years like milestones hold apart
His steps and hearth forsaken.

Winter is but the lovely spring
That softly lies asleep,
Wherein he finds renewed each thing
In contemplation deep,

And spring is but the garland wound
On Summer's brow of rose,
Autumn, the veil of windy sound
That weary Summer chose.

And winter comes again, but he
Knows well that spring nor sigh
Will ever waken joyously
The dancing feet that die.

The seasons come, the seasons go,
Roll slowly forth to years;
His eye is dim, yet proud the snow
And silver that he wears.

Still onward, onward, lone and free,
He plods, nor comes again,
Goes walking, walking endlessly
In everlasting rain.

SONG OF REMEMBRANCE

I see that shining castle rise
Again athwart the sun,
Brave in the Valley of the Bow
Where emerald waters run.

I see the Rockies, peak on peak,
Like myriad giants stand,
With snow-white crests and riven flanks,
Austere on either hand.

Above, the rugged timber-line
Where cloud and wind come down,
Where fog and rain on those gaunt heights
Mantle the giants' frown.

The cleft twin radiance of the Bow
Azure and glacial green
Glides on, so cold and clear and still,
The spirit of the scene.

Cascade and Rundle flank its flow
Like battlements of old,
Raised by some legendary race
When Northern Lights shone cold.

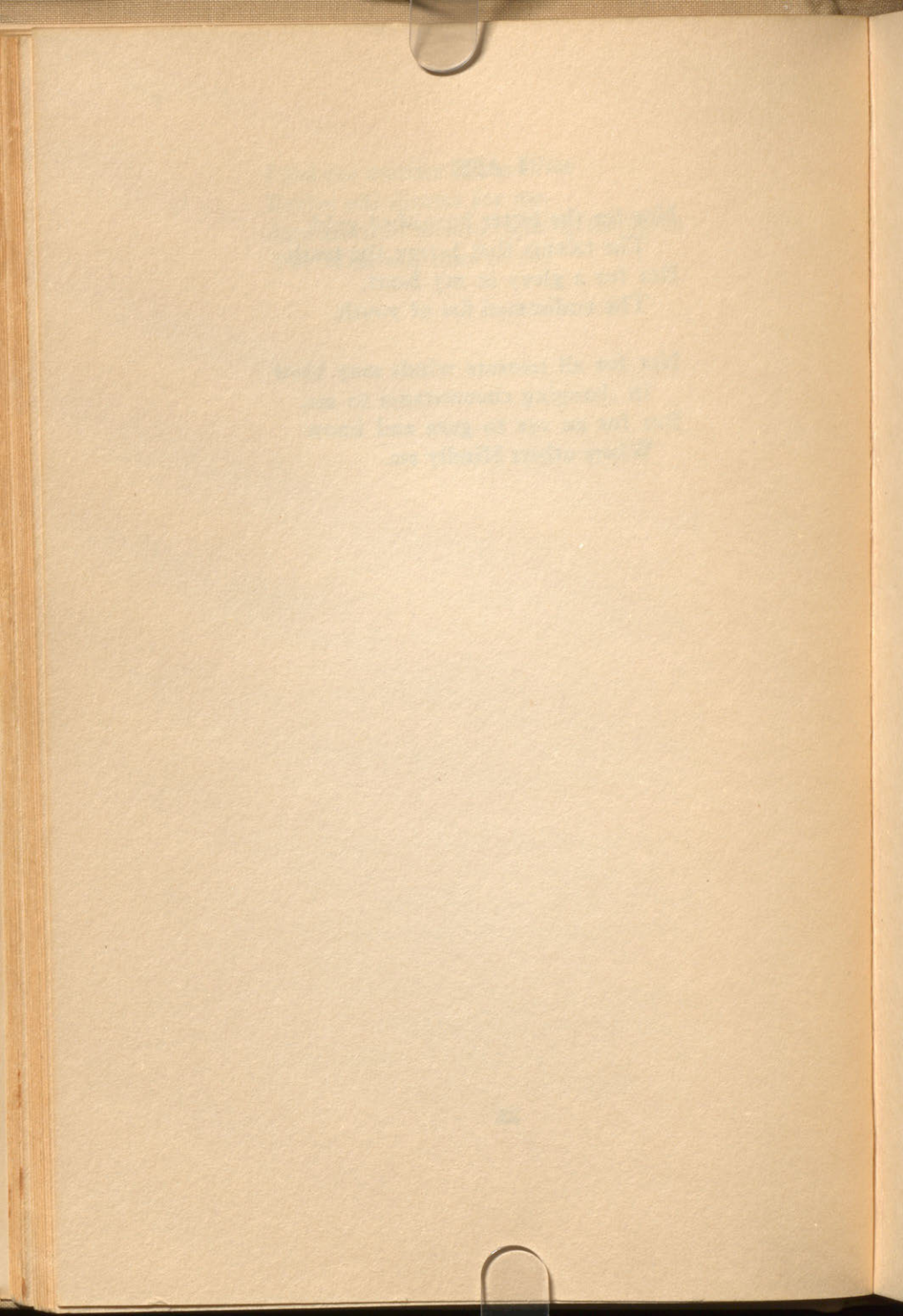
I see the Sarcee tepees rise
Far down the sunburnt vale,
The feathered chieftains, kerchiefed squaws,
The sachems thin and pale.

I feel the wonder of the West
Revive old dreams for me,
And all those dreams light up the flame
The West was once to me.

I ASK

Not for the bitter burnished gold,
 The talents that betray the truth,
But for a glory in my heart,
 The undimmed fire of youth.

Not for all treasure winds may blow
 In changing circumstance to me,
But for an eye to gaze and know
 Where others blindly see.



II
SONNETS

VISTA

I wandered once, a boy in Arcady,
Who heard the golden sound of lute and pipe,
And Goddesses half-glimpsed in ecstasy
When all the dreams of youth were full and ripe.
I thrilled to simple joys ere I became
Aware that life was daily, dull and real,
Then suddenly saw fall life's leaping flame
Into an ash the hand could touch and feel.
Let no voice mock the power of youth's deep dreaming
Which wears the stuff of true divinity;
All things material must end in seeming,
But that deep pulse, the spirit's liberty,
Throbs in long tides of light, with visions gleaming
While Heaven wraps the soul still soaring free.

HYMN TO BEAUTY

O lonely power of Beauty, bear with me,
And walk the valley of these meagre days.
Let sunset gold and moonrise silver fee
The unrewarded singer of thy praise.
Let all the passionate fury of thy storms
Answer the tempest in my troubled heart,
Let the bright wonder of thy diverse forms
Touch and translate me with their burning art,

That some sure power, glowing within my hand,
May flash its Aves to the bending stars
And, shining forth, claim Beauty as my bride,
She whom the prophets stalked through many a land,
She whose best lovers wear the bitterest scars,
Beauty, the poet's death-wound and his pride.

THE VISITATION

✓

Last night one asked me: 'What is best of all?
What think you is the worthiest thing in life?'
I spoke of thee, never to fade or fall,
Beauty, the one true laurel of our strife,—
Strange and relentless Beauty, the unforgiving
Austere, pervasive wonder of the skies
And deeps of earth, Beauty, the flame of living,
The Artist and the Dream behind his eyes.

I turned me homeward, walking through the night,
Looked at the sky indifferently, and there—
There in the April heaven's magic light
Stood Beauty with star-silver on her hair,
Calm and immortal, bending to my sight,
The bright Queen brooding in the violet air.

MOONLIGHT SONATA

Charmed as Ulysses, rapt from life and earth,
I hear again those Lydian measures calm:
The low still sweetness of a great love's birth,
The sorrow of a joy that knew no balm.
For in this perfect anthem of the heart
A poor, disfigured god who worshipped truth
Whispered with his immeasurable art
The deep-pulsed passion of his deeper youth.

Now in this magic well, where genius bled,
I touch those springs dried up a hundred years;
And Love that once lived greatly, leaves the dead
To walk this earth with human joys and fears,
And round her passing ivory feet are spread
Immortal pearls that once were mortal tears.

LATE SPRING

Not to the rose, the empress of the warm,
The full-sunned months of summer, do I give
Praise for her splendour and deep-incensed charm
Which make the bee-folk feel their joy must live
Forever; not unto the rose I thrill,
But to those first adventurers of the spring,
The shy white crocus, the brave daffodil,
Who gladden bitter April and who bring
A strange prophetic courage from the ground
And herald all the waiting hosts of May.
These are the perfect poets of the year,
Who in the heartless skies some heart have found,
Some promise of riches ripening with each day,
And whisper for the listening few to hear.

HARVEST

There is a quietness in autumn fields
To soothe the driven spirit, for it seems
These dowered lands, golden with ample yields,
Lie resting, having filled their April dreams.
These have upborne, like men, the bitter frost,
The furious lash of heaven, and in need
Panted for dark warm rain, thought summer lost,
Yet to fruition at last have borne their seed.

So it may be with me—despite all stress,
All strange uncertain fears and curious pain,
Long winters of the heart, lost happiness,
I shall complete this mortal year, and gain
Some golden still September of the soul
Whose harvest-tide brings ripeness of the whole.

ELEGY IN OCTOBER

I never see a glowing autumn hill
Flame heavenward with red October's yield
That does not wake in me the ancient thrill
Of banners waving on a stricken field.
That heartening gust of glory, like a shout
From aging hills, from slowly-stiffening trees
Almost dispels the spirit's ashen doubt
That men will know no second spring like these.

And yet the glory in these slopes of gold,
Copper and crimson, veiled in the purple breath
Of panting autumn, seems, as they unfold
The mournful and splendid empery of death,
A prophecy, a legend woven of old:
'Death is the crown of love and life,' it saith.

HOLY NIGHT

The loud, tumultuous and troubled world
Is laid away this night, and wrapped in sleep;
Silently stand doubt's banners dumbly furled,
And in the sky one Star her watch doth keep
With her eternal precious light of faith
Streaming all-soundlessly from heaven's portal;
Hushed are my questionings, and that poor wraith
Of unbelief reborn in faith immortal.

White is the moon, and diamonded the snow,
But whiter burns the truth in my poor hearth,
Rekindled with a strange tremendous glow—
For He has come again to bless His earth
As once He came, long centuries ago,
When man and star stood marvelling at His birth.

THE NUNS

Darkly they sit, these sabled brides of God
Beside a lovely rose of mortal stain;
Half corpse, half angel, though love's realm be broad,
These two will never walk his way again.

Great-eyed and wistful, quiet and serene,
Beyond the storms of life, the sea of fears
That shake the spirit; now all their joy has been,
And they have joined the consecrated years.

They know God's peace; we know His earthly strife,
The sweat, the fevers, and the rack of grief,
But we who still dare drain the cup of life,
Possess the fiercer, triply bright belief;
For man must walk the thorny way of God,
Sigh for the star and suffer with the clod.

TO THE FAILURES

(for Canada's Confederation Jubilee)
(Ottawa, July 1, 1927.)

In this, our time of young magnificence
When cannons echo and broad banners stream,
Let us foregather in deep reverence
About the ancient tombs of long-dead dream,
Where ripens the high dust of common men
Who visioned this Day's pride in ages past,
Who rose unsummoned and lay down again,
Sealed our first noble power with their last.

Their legioned names and virtues sleep untold,
Who strode a bitter path from birth to death,
But all the hills are richer by their gold
And all the winds blow stronger by their breath.
Their deeds are dreams of splendour that we own,
Dreams of immortals graveless and unknown.

✓
ON SEEING A PICTURE OF BLISS CARMAN
TALKING TO CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

These are great men—they walked no beaten way,
They joined no ranks, embraced no paltry round.
I talked and drank with them one autumn day
And never elsewhere such companions found.
They were a part of all-ennobling life,
They guessed beyond the littleness of death;
They had lived greatly, yet from muddy strife
Dwelt not aloof, but savoured every breath.

Now one of these is gone, and one remains,
One still plays on, though one has played his scene.
Something from time, for Canada, they won,
And we are richer for their having been.
I still remember with thoughts fond and slow
I talked and drank with them, once, long ago.

SONNET FOR THE RUPERT BROOKE
MONUMENT

(ON THE ÆGEAN ISLAND OF SKYROS)

Where Theseus sleeps, his storied labours ended,
Whence Pyrrhus and Achilles sped to Troy,
The Skyrian Greeks keep vigil for a boy
And honour English dust with Greek earth blended.
Build high his monument, whose youth defended
That kingdom of young dreams and ancient joy.
Both sword and lyre he bore; no years destroy
His legend which old Homer might have friended.

He sleeps on Skyros where great Shades abide,
Where he, a later Paris, with quick will
Renewed the spell of beauty. Far and wide
Men come this April, and new Iliads thrill;
And whispering yet, where England's poet died,
The wine-dark seas, unvintageable still.

SONNET TO 'A.E.'

Wonder and mystery are marvels old
Of which we grow forgetful in our time,
Yet from the ore of earth their lasting gold
Is melted with the magic of his rhyme;
Born in the poet's eye, a power frees
Beauty eternal from the clod and clay;
His words so shine above the sombre seas
That midnight trembles with the sheen of day

O gentle Prophet! let the glowing past
Speak to us as thy mystic rapture sings,
Until with souls awakened, strong at last,
We are caught up in glory as on wings
That lift us to the stars, and gain the vast,
The calm magnificence of ancient kings.

THOMAS HARDY

(January 12, 1928.)

There is a silence in the halls of Death
And all the thunderous march of feet is still;
There is a brooding in the very breath
Of him who folds our ways unto his will.

The great pale Emperor and his grievous train
Upon the marble place their weapons cold,
For one who faces all their force again
Has said: "Stir not, I know you all of old."

His gaze is shut, but open he has left
The eyes of men, has shown that sombre road
That must be travelled over countries rude.
Sorrow of half her sting is now bereft
In being known, and Fate puts by her goad,
For he has given us truth and fortitude.

EPHEMERA

I am less than the ash on a cigarette,
I am something deathless that dies like smoke,
But I shall survive some few years yet
And dream of the night when my soul awoke,
Awoke once more in a blaze of youth,
Awoke in the kiss of your seventeen
That is closer allied with beauty and truth
Than all the empires that have been.

I will sing while I may that tempestuous joy,
That glowed in my heart by your magic stirred,
When you kindled that glory the years destroy,
And I lay silent, with never a word.
I will dream and remember, till bound in the sod
I am blind to beauty, the rose of God.

FIRST SONNET OF AN UNWRITTEN
SEQUENCE

Like some jewelled wave agleam on time's grey sea
With radiant mane that flashes back the sun,
You bless that barren reef, the heart of me,
Now standing bathed in beauty strangely won.
Crowned with a moment's wonder, all aglow,
An evanescent glory, silver-veined,
Swiftly arises, and then sinking slow,
Holds those last golden drops so richly stained.

So long and level is life's bitter plain,
So far the fruitless journey void of rest,
So parched the soul's poor desert for love's rain,
I choose to dare the mountain's glittering crest,
I choose the instant splendour and the pain,
The glory of your lips, your eyes, your breast.

REMINISCENCE

I love old thoughts that rise from dear dead things
And in my heart there's nothing left unloved,
Not even the strange sweet sadness silence brings
When I stray back to bygone forms beloved.
I listen to their ghosts, am comforted
With happy ways we trod, now stranger grown;
Alone I murmur the deep words we said,
Repeat fair phrases that we made our own.

 This is not grief, my greed of happiness,
Though hearts that never loved have naught to grieve,
And hearts that have, know thoughts of kindness
That Memory keeps in shadow of her sleeve,
To sanctify gold sunshine and grey rain
When Loves that sleep find dreaming's tryst again.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

I wandered once with you to Lyonesse
Whose hours are as we dream all life might be;
And lighted by your pale-gold loveliness,
I seemed from every sorrow to be free.
Youth shone eternal, and the stars came near,
As we, earth's exiles, turned in singing home
Across the moors, until we saw appear
The nameless violet Sea with silver foam.

That was long since—and I have never made
That strange enchanted pilgrimage again,
And now its windings from my memory fade,
For I came back in darkness, wind and rain.
I turned from Youth—but you, being unafraid,
Eternally in Lyonesse remain.

THE ROSE OF LIFE

✓

This rosebud that you wore upon your breast
When you were lovelier than ever to my eyes
Sinks in the glass before me. Curled to rest
Each petal deepens its burning red and dies.
So must your youth be deepened, so must mine,
So must the fairer rosebuds that you wear
Feel Death's pale lips, when age treads down their vine
And fallen is the fragrance from your hair.

Let time and fate work out their ancient will,
Poor withered twain who wander beauty's snows—
We have known youth, breathed happiness until
Our spirits outsped the swiftest wind that blows.
Death, we have triumphed! For on love's white hill
Sunrise has touched us as we plucked the rose.

NIGHT-SONNET

I wonder, if you came to me in love
Across this wintry night, on instant wings
Whiter than those mysterious stars that move
Austere and heedless of earth's creeping things,
I wonder . . . if you came, would I forget
My fevered spirit's journey for a time,
Lost in your love's warm heaven, beyond regret,
Beyond the rack of life and lust of rhyme,

Safe in quiescence, wrapped in silent joy,
A seed of spring beneath love's swathing snow,
Not dreaming of sure autumns that destroy,
Awaiting Aprils unimagined now?

If such might be, 'twere better you were here
To deafen me—Fate's whispering in my ear.

MIRACLE

O lovelier than calm sea asleep below
A quiet azure heaven do you seem,
Or a deep still river whose unmeasured flow
Moves soundless toward the sea, or some rich dream
That haunts the caverns of mysterious sleep;
O love, you are as some soft robe of peace
In which my wearied soul is folded deep,
Your kiss my spirit's single true release.
Round me a roaring crowd, my mind a surge,
My heart long deafened, I would gladly rest,
Yet when you look at me, my griefs are furled
Like stricken banners. Silently you urge
Me to believe again: and I am blest,
For Beauty walks once more across the world.

KENORA SONNETS

Now after sleeping long, I wake once more,
Full of deep dream, and drowsy still from sleep,
Loth to awaken, but this misted shore
Awaits my landing. Now Fate thunders deep
With sudden lightning, rain and hail and wind;
Life truly lived is storm, I know, and tears.
Ah, when we meet what changes shall we find
From memory's portraits treasured through the years?

Ghost birches tremble in the greyish dawn,
Like time's mysterious mirror lies the lake;
Now, at your cabin door, the years are gone—
Now I shall touch what time deigned not to take—
And there you smiled in youth and beauty drest
More lovely and more radiant than I guessed.

* * * *

✓ I clasped your hand, and in its warmth I knew
Not only your true beauty, but the truth
That I was young once more, and wore like you,
The fadeless and enduring flower of youth.
Like golden cohorts round the setting sun
Proudly there strode the legions of the years,
And like an emperor, crowned with triumphs won,
Our time of love rode trampling down its fears.
Do you remember, in the mountained West,
Where rose the Rockies, where in youth's bright day,
We burned our loveliest candles, loved our best
In three sweet days that hushed the world away?
Could such a memory live again or last?
Dared the fair present rival that sweet past?

THE QUEST

Why must Love end on heart-ache and depart
A star that fades before the dawn of day?
Why must each lovely tenant leave the heart
Void, desolate and drear, without a ray
Of that sweet presence which once filled life full?
Life is a dreary march when love no more
Comes flying radiant as a sun-tipped gull,
When we dare not recall what lived before.
Forgive us if we must go questing still
To search far lands, to find the flower of truth
That blooms beyond the shoulder of some hill
Where Love lies sleeping by the side of youth.
Once having known that glory come of God,
We seek it still in sky and sea and sod.

SONNET FOR ONE FORSAKEN

It is not well for us to lie with ghosts
Drowsed by the opiate of long-perished bliss,
For Time, the bitter reaper, never boasts
Of having culled so rare a bloom as this.
We only, we remembering, we who stay
And watch a burnt-out hearth and vacant chair
That stares at us, we die from day to day,
While the quaint ghost we mourn laughs on elsewhere.
 Yet there's no secret glory in the world,
No proud lost host more splendid than this grief
Which stumbles on, sword sheathed and banner furled,
But mounts immortal on its own belief.
For mourning love, we rise on spectral wings
Above life's rabble of insensate things.

IN TIME OF FROST

When youth's bright sun has fallen behind the hills,
The dim and unforgiving hills of time;
When love's fair galleon sails no more sublime
But grounds upon a bitter reef and fills,
With wave on greying wave from memory's sea;
When even my heart, a dried and blackened grape,
Is drained and withered to a graveyard shape,
'Tis then proud shadows come to comfort me:

Each one of these was I, and I was each:
I danced with love and youth; on freedom's wing
Ranged unhorizoned heavens, past the reach
Of all regret and every sombre thing.
Winter has come, and yet upon stark trees
Rustle the shadows of last April's leaves.

HIS HOUR UPON THE STAGE

So happy have I been in life's best ways,
Found promise in the morning, peace by night,
Have sung the splendour of Youth's shining days
And worshipped Love with ever-new delight!
For there were sun-lit slopes in Winter's time,
And shores of silence where no tempests fall,
And golden hair more rich than poet's rhyme—
And there were kisses garlanded on all!

I wonder as I sit alone and read
The play that's written deeply in my soul:
Are hearts but made to waken, thrill, and bleed?
Did this grey pilgrim play that perfect role?
Once through his lines he spoke with careless speed,
Forgot a word, an act, and then the whole.

THE PILGRIMS

Like men abandoned in an alien land
Beyond the hope of any mortal spring,
These naked trees in desolation stand,
Each one, a silent, stark and spectral thing.
They have forgotten, and no more they stir
With memories of magic wrought in May,
And like cold cenotaphs of lives that were,
Stricken to stone, they bear the heavy day.

So stands the poet, having put aside
Or dropped, he knows not where, his youth and dreams
And that bright mantle woven out of song;
Then dumbly onward, where strange hills divide,
He journeys out beyond the singing streams
Where youth awakes no more, and life is long.

VALE!

(FOR E. W. MCL.)

We are the poets who gave up the Quest,
We have forgotten—ask not who we are—
We who have known life's loveliest and best,
Gone with the rose, the wind, the risen star.
Now with Aeneas, quite forgetting Troy
And Carthage, and all burning bootless sorrows,
We feel time's slow-consuming tongue destroy
The glowing past, and char these gray tomorrows.

For like bright robes, we have laid down our
dreams,

Have left off being fools and prophets now;
Snapped are the lyre's fair strings, forever, it seems;
No more thought shines like light upon our brow,—
Now we let fall to earth those blackened brands,
Who signalled gods with lightning in our hands.

IN TENEBRIS

How came I hither, to this barren place,
Where stamped out black is all the soul's pure light?
Where all-forgotten is the joyous grace
Of living, and all endless shuts the night.
Once life was lovely, careless, young and fair,
Once in my heart youth sang, an April thrush,
And I guessed not that any bird was there,
'Till now that it is fled, I *feel* the hush.

Grown old in two brief years, and burdened o'er
With this dark heavy weight of prisoning days,
So far behind the unreal enchanted shore,
So far ahead the desert that delays
My passage into peace; ah, nevermore
Will flower for me the laurel or shining bays.

NADIR

When o'er the edge of life's abyss I peer
For that grey moment which will mark my close
And will not let me keep, however dear,
One memory of beauty's ghostly rose,
So tenuous seems my claim on all this world,
This vague and fleeting mirage in the mist
Vanisht when vast black pennons are unfurled,
That I recall not even the lips I kissed.

Here, with a coin for Charon in my hand,
I pace the marge of shrouded shoreless sea;
Behind, the unremembered, and before,
Unplumbed oblivion; well I understand
The moment's cloak of being that I wore,
And marvel at my piteous entity.

ICARUS, 1937

Out of the crypts of time did Man arise
To crawl, to walk, to think, even as a god,
And now, at last, grimly he rides the skies
And blasts his kind back to the bloodied sod.
Behold the Heir of wisdom, he who thinks,
The chiefest captain in the ranks of Death!
Before his awful cunning the tiger shrinks;
His fury makes the lightning but a breath.

He makes calm heaven a pathless road of hell
And bears the earth's dread dust above the clouds;
The burst of bombs shall blare his passing knell
When all steel wings are folded into shrouds.
For he has made God's peaceful quiet sky
A glass where children look—and scream—and die.

Aug. 23, 1937.

III
REALITIES

HARLEM SPEAKEASY

A strapping negress, all sex and vitality,
Straight black hair slicked back-combed,
Pounds piano with strong Congo rhythm,
Singing obscene ballads robustiously.
Pound . . . pound . . . arms of a wrestler . . . white flash
of eyes and teeth.

A dreamy lad with a wide wide red tie
And moons of eyes plucks banjo
Languorously, evilly, indifferent to it all . . . all.
First table—a sleek, pink-jowled gunman
Who has dined on shad roe,
Gun-bulge on his hip, the 'rod' seen in flashes,
Talks gently to his ivory-yellow girl
Delicate as the rain, great-eyed as a fawn.
Second table—two Broadway song-boys
Mean, lean, and rhythmic, smooth as oil,
Smartly poured into trick tuxes
Listen to that big big piano . . . pound . . . pound,
Draw the tune in air with filchy fingers.
The song-boys' ladies are the other kind,
Loud, blond, reaching for the square-faced jug
Under the table.

Now a coloured boy
Jet-faced, smiling vastly, fo' gold teeth,
Rises, an' scoops off his iron hat,
Rolls it up one arm, over shoulders, down the other
An' a bow. Shuffle . . . shuffle . . . shuffle
"I went dahown Sain' Jaames Infirm'ry . . .
Nothin' elts ta do" . . . shuffle . . . shuffle . . .

Tap-tap—boy's feet join rhythm . . .
Tap-tap—a-tap . . . coins ring on the oilcloth,
Two folded bills—tap-tap-a-tap-tap . . . wilder
“Letta go! letta go! Gawd blessa!”
Shuffle . . . shuffle . . . “nevva finda sweet mahan like
me.”

Applause that's really meant—not like Broadway
Where even the phallic urge is tinsel.
Third table—Hebrew cloak-and-suit king,
Kindly, full-fleshed, makin' whoopee in dead earnest;
Young man in tuxedo rises, does a ginny strut,
“We wuz playin' dere an' de clock struck fo',
Bed broke down, an' we finished on de flo'”
Laugh . . . laugh . . . piano poundpoundpound—
Gin—Virginia ham 'n' eggs an' hot biscuits,
Square-face jug—“Went dahowna Sain' Jaames
Infirm'ry.”

Five bells, and now the Blue Monday Clubs open.

Harlem, Mar., 1930.

JEWISH FISH-MARKET

Something pervasive in the attitudes
Of these dread, sombre-scaled, cold-bellied carp
Touches the Race of prejudicial feuds
Who stroke the fat fish as one would a harp.
Through muddy bilge that brims the clammy tins
Plump hands plop down, or filthy stringy nets
Pursue these turgid brutes with leaden fins,
Then pound their heads until the cold blood jets.

This is a peak among ignoble things,
The symbol of the ugly, cheap and loud,
A place wherefrom a stinking reek takes wings,
Piscine and smiting, eddying through the crowd.
Down the mean street vast waistless women come
Bearing dank heavy carp in triumph home.

"MIDWAY"

(CANADIAN NATIONAL EXHIBITION)

This is the symbol of our roaring age
Wherein a joyous crowd laughs all night long
Beneath ten thousand lights at fool or sage
And drowns all sorrow in a raucous song.
Here are monstrosities from all the earth,
And here are men who pay to see the things
They might have been, or are, in their souls' worth,
And here are beasts with minds, and men with stings.

Before a garish tent, on creaking boards
A dancing girl with laughter on her lips
Allures the jaded-credulous in hordes
To see the rhythmic swaying of her hips.
Bright comedy is painted on her face,
And anguish hidden in her nimble grace.

RADIO DOWNSTAIRS

Hot black jazz on Sunday morning,
Slangy syrup in my gloom,
Red-hot rhythm pounding, blaring
Like a demon in the womb.

Raucous yell and shallow smoothness,
Then the cymbals' thudding din,
Belch and blast and bloody booming,
Satan rattling tin.

Science, joke of all the ages,
Hurled this hell upon the sky;
Bombs are brutal in their bursting—
But their victims die.

DEPRESSION CHANTS

I

The men of honour marched away,
Full twenty years ago
Brave in the ardour of a day,
Full bravely to a show.

The men of honour tramp to-day
On soleless, shambling feet,
Tramps who like heroes marched away
To death, denied and sweet.

Now, with his kind each riven soul
Plays out his tattered part,
And not the highest wall can hide
The ache in a people's heart.

II

I've heard them talk, the *little men*,
Who only dare go on,
Their talk goes plaining through the land,
At midnight and at dawn.

The railmen, teachers, clerks, the boys
Who never earned a wage
Are stricken swift with thunderous years,
With helplessness of age.

They even call the Beast of War
Up from his hideous lair
And bid the Beast to walk again—
If only Work be there.

III

The eyes of mortals wear no more
A happy smiling grace,
But dumb suspicion and despair
Are cut in every face.

The old men pass, the young men rise
And beat an iron-barred gate.
The fires of hope fade in their eyes,
The drab dumb years grow late.

They have no port, no place in life,
The world has nought for them—
What *have* these luckless children done
That any dare condemn?

IV

In little shop, in little lodge,
In places on the street
Men gather, softly talking on
The woes where mortals meet.

In corner-store and country inn
Their talk is chill with dread:
It seems the hand of God withholds
His blessed daily bread.

The rich are blest, or are they curst,
To brothers' sufferings blind?
No man so rich he cannot hear
Fierce mutterings in the wind.

V

I hear the sound of nations rise,
 I hear the timeless drum
 Throb on the distant hills and skies,
 I hear the morrow come:

With tread portentous and with mien
 August and veiled she comes,
 And all the People of the Hills
 Pound on their spirit-drums.

We dwell upon this bitter plain;
 Where morrows are the same;
 An Empress passed last night, they say,
 And no one knew she came.

VI

The wheat-lands stretch across the world
 Across God's fruitful earth;
 The wheat and grape still sprout and spring,
 But man's one crop is Dearth.

We sow—but others all shall reap;
 We plough—a foreign soil;
 And famine haunts our fretful sleep
 And failure haunts our toil.

"Let the bright golden grain blow wide,"
 The stricken reaper said,
 "Why should I swink and toil and sow?—
 I shall not eat this bread."

Weston, 1933.

ON LOOKING DOWN
FROM THE WOOLWORTH TOWER

There, but for the grace of God,
The whim of fate, the star, the rod,
There go I, that luckless mote
Ant combined with god and goat,
That drably-coloured wandering dot
Might be me as well as not.
Seven hundred feet below
See him scurry, dodge, and go
Like a bug that's quite afraid
Of the great steel feet he's made,
Hapless atom driven and whirled
Who bears the sorrows of the world
Herculean upon his shoulders
To the scorn of all beholders.

See these splendid ant-hills rise
Boldly challenging the skies,
Where the human insects fight
Many an aching day and night
One triumphant, one in vain
Tugging at a golden grain.
Wall Street! See it huddled there
Stony waste of sullen care!
Far more fortunate the bugs,
For even the lowliest crawler tugs
Out his combat in the grass,
Where the flower-shadows pass;
But here the meadows are of stone
And here man lives for bread alone;

Here the trees are trunked with steel,
Grow so high the senses reel,
But are further still from God
Than the ant beneath the sod.

In the harbour stands a doll,
LIBERTY, the luckless thrall
Pointing upward, stricken dumb,
To the dreams that never come.

Manhattan, 1930.

“ 'TIS FOLLY TO BE WISE”

The heroes going on before,
Each one a splendid shining wraith,
The heroes who came back again
To mock and shake our crumbling faith,
They leave us little, and we stand
Chaos behind and doubt ahead;
The God of Gold that roars to-day
Is not the Legend we were fed.
What sage dare blame us if we cry:
“Let's live the present fiercely out!”
And drown the thunder all around
With half-courageous song and shout?
Around volcanoes let us dance
While older prophets gently weep,
For when the damned things burst again
They'll bury good and evil deep.
Toss learning's physic to the dogs,
For culture begs her crumb to-day
And humbly picks the ringing pence
The lords of Mammon throw away.
Think not on life, or you'll go mad,
The one solution is to live it—
We're ninety storeys from the ground,
So stand, my lad, and drive your rivet!

SKYSCRAPER

I sit not as the Pyramid
For centuries upon the sands—
I rose but yesterday amid
A million hurried hammering hands.

The stars I challenge in the night,
The sun I meet in molten day;
A man-built mountain bearing might,
A monument to mortal clay.

A yellow-flaming word I burn
In heaven all the midnight hours
Above a multitude that turn
To marvel at their puny powers.

They reared me, and I hold them still
Between my iron ribs to toil—
I wield a long-relentless will
And all their strongest efforts foil.

I am the might that is not man,
Though all my might man gave to me;
Far dawns and sunsets I shall scan
When my creators cease to be.

The hill am I that ants have built,
If they be crushed, I shall not crumble;
Yet, though man's gold be turned to gilt,
His generations rise and rumble.

The whispers that I hear within
Proclaim the truth of man still able
To speak his thousand tongues and sin,
To build his god a braver Babel.

Now God is wealth, a giant gold,
A mound made higher year by year,
A Calf of daily increase told
By hundreds' faith and millions' fear.

I am the Temple blowing not
A trumpet calling men to strife—
They come unbidden, hastening hot
To earn the bitter bread of life.

With even, strong, electric eyes
Reminding man of toil to come
I nightly gaze across the skies
And hear the morrow's rolling drum.

By day all quietude forsaking,
By night on sleepless watch I tower,
My sound and silence ever making
Immortal Voice of mortal power!

SOLUTION

"GOD," I asked, "Oh, why make You
Angels' deeds for men to do?
For Your all-rewarded good
Is not all within my blood.

If to You I chain my mind,
There is much I shall not find.
All that You would have me be
Lies beyond the power of me.

I am made unlike You, God;
Half is star, and half is clod,
And the seed that You have sown
Bears much fruit You would not own."

Lightning-like there blinded me
All the Light I asked to see;
Swiftly as a sudden flame
The eternal Answer came:

"Know you that Despair I made,
Courage comes to one afraid —
As from darkness cometh light,
Suffering leads toward steadfast sight.

Know you I created Doubt
Seeking final wisdom out;
Hate I formed to burn away
Guileful love of yesterday.

Know you I created Lust
To consume the crumbling dust,
As a furnace whence the soul
Rises crystalline and whole.

Grief I made to mould the child
Into manhood reconciled;
Evil made that man might see
Good was of eternity.

Man's own mind evolves my Law,
Sees his dread soul-foeman's claw
Drive him slow with scourge and rod
To the triumph of a God."

✓

TEACHER

"It will be Spring by then," the teacher said
As he turned up two pages on his roll,
"It will be Spring"—at that rich thought there fled
The routine legions camped about his soul.

The room stood empty and the vacant seats
Eyed him like silent warders, row and row
Yawning through long bleak years like bitter cheats,
A bitter yawn that mocked the heart's bright glow.

"It will be Spring by then"—out to the field
Frozen and blank he turned—"it will be Spring,"
And then the ghost of April like a rose
Stirred in his heart, a still-undying thing.

For with bright April and the thrill of May
The humblest soul remembers all its songs,
The bitterest night slow burgeons into day
The laden heart puts forth its heaviest wrongs.

"It will be Spring again"—and in his mind
The narrow petty sorrows of each day
Fled on the gusts of some wild passionate wind
Aye, for an instant fled long leagues away.

PEDAGOGUE

Day after endless leaden day,
Trampling on heavy heel,
Class after endless leaden class,
Boys came and went, indifferent stolid lads
Who listened with a yawning bored respect.

He rubbed his eyes, heaved up his tired soul
Went on and on, by memory and rote,
Smearing figures on the board,
And taught—and kept his family very well.

Week after week the sky hung smoky grey,
A saddening pall;
Figures in thousands jumbled in his mind;
At home the baby cried;
The class were a dull incessant drone. . . .
And then
A fitful yellow shaft of setting sun
Danced in the dusty windows
Across that sullen street.
And like a lovely naked golden girl
Swift wakening from sleep,
A splendid vision mounted in his mind
(A far reality, now rotten dust,)
A splendid vision leapt before his eyes:
How once he laughed aloud
High in the cross-trees, rocking under heaven,
When, twenty years ago,
Where long seas roll forever
A tall foam-breasting skysail-yarder
Had sailed around the dark and savage Horn.

BEYOND

Each day he taught his class of boys and girls
In that large room whose windows looked afar,
Across the river to the purple hills
Sleeping in mist forever.

Often he saw the children's eager eyes
Turn from their books, and dwell upon the hills
Then suddenly they looked at him:
Manhood and freedom, symbol of a day
When all their long vague dreams would be complete.

He knew their thoughts,
Gazed outward on the hills,
Turned back to their child-faces,
Shook his head,
And looked upon the hills,
And closed his eyes.

TO A SMALL-TOWN SCHOOL TRUSTEE

Sleek as a smooth and strutting Boston-bull,
Snug in the blanket of his own conceit,
This barking blusterer, with his ego full
And self-admiring, strides on spatted feet.
He loves to play the leader of his kind,
But when he speaks, those words unsaid are best;
To every merit, save his own, stone-blind,
With all his power, Nature's poorest jest.

Yea, let him prance pug-like thru life's stern school,
This flatulentus posing as a wind
That blows so mightily, and stirs its pool
As self-revealing as 'tis unrefined.
Let the grim years teach him the bitter rule
Of vain ambition foaming in the mind.

Weston, 1933.

BALLADE OF LITTLE COMFORT

I

Pray, look at life from every side,
The men and women, rights and wrongs,
The little goals, the lengthy ride,
The Fates with all their knotted thongs.
Joy on some other sphere belongs,
But not on this—pray, let me flout it!
Life isn't worth the lovely songs
The lying poets sing about it.

II

Weigh all the woes of chance and tide,
The changes rung on Time's dull gongs,
They're all the same, footloose or tied,
All men are squeezed in Misery's tongs;
None gets the prize for which he longs;
The silver lining? Let me doubt it!
Life isn't worth the lovely songs
The lying poets sing about it.

III

Be merry—many a priest has lied
To comfort all the groaning throngs,
But even the peerless Helen died
And to the dusty worm belongs—
Each year has jabs with sharper prongs,
There's little joy; pray, let me shout it!
Life isn't worth the lovely songs
The lying poets sing about it.

L'ENVOI

Think, when beset with fearful wrongs,
Grief is our birthright, none without it;
Life isn't worth the lovely songs
The lying poets sing about it.

PARADISE

Germs, swathed in red and rich corpuscles,
Banqueting on veins and muscles,
Predict in sweet atomic dreams
A Paradise whose Body gleams.
They dine on Scraps of Matter here,
But where is the Eternal Bier,
Where all their rhythmic gambols are
Untreated, unicellular?
Loud in their germy, gaudy marts
Confiding electronic hearts
Murmur, while faith and trust are poured
Upon th' Unfailing Germic Word:
"Germs cannot die, such youthful flocks in
Millions beneath dark Antitoxin;
Millions now living ne'er shall die
Breathing a microphonic sigh;
They shall not know ends cataleptic
Beneath the blighting Antiseptic."—
For lo! there liveth—Sperm of Sperm,
The Vast Ubiquitous Life-Germ
Who gnawed and flourished in an age
Ere doctors pulsed, ere prying sage
Upon their mystic kingdoms broke
With eyes of old Leeuwenhœk;
Omnipotent and multicelled,
Yet One, though many-tentacled
He guards from Vigour, evil Vulture,
The smallest and least harmful culture;
HE gives the strong a hardy track
To Triumph in the Cardiac.

Of Him each wan and fading speck
Dreams on mid convalescence-wreck,
And in weird dialect each prattles
Of future far one-sided battles.
For Somewhere, claims the harried horde,
Is Paradise that doth afford
Deliciousness and long delight
Feasts Saturnalian all the night.

There Health is not, while Ill is good,
And in a gay infectious flood
Germs gnaw where Strength may not endure
And all infrequent is the Cure.
Lo! in that far Beyond, say Germs,
Are epidemics, scourges, worms
Of all undying race and power
Where Illness holds Eternal hour,
While pale contagion's effervescence
Attains at last its true Putrescence;
There all is Ill, yet all is well
And endless anthems surge and swell—
"There," reads the Germic Word, "lean Death
Produces life's triumphant breath."

STATION PLATFORM

We stood alone in sunlight,
Green fields and summer skies;
For these and wind-blown buttercups
We had no eyes.

We stood alone while sombre thoughts
Fell in our hearts like rain,
And swiftly from the north roared down
The thundering train.

We stood alone as lovers,
Happy to all beholders,
And the bloody weight of this damned life
Hung on our shoulders.

RELIC

This little thing is all I have of you,
Have here, where we have been as close and sweet
As the white rose at midnight to the dew,
The lovely rose whose shadowed petals greet
That eager visitant. Now this is all
Remaining of that perfect yield of love
When two spent boughs in linked embrace did fall,
When love's south wind touched youth's awakened
grove.

Where we found heaven is now my quiet hell,
And now my weary thoughts go sadly forth;
Now from its liveness rings a heart's cracked bell:
"Bring out your dead, you stricken, south and
north. . . ."

And side by side so many thousands sleep
Sprawled impotent, indifferent as dead sheep.

IRREVERENCE

When these dead bones shall rise from earth
To take on heavenly form and worth,
Oh tell me not that I shall be
More clothed in sheen and symmetry
Than when a lovely damsel found
Me lovely ere I came to ground.

For looking on my lasting Gear,
Its Holiness will needs appear
A flawless figure void of blood,
A perfect platter bare of food,
Eternity without a spring,
An April where no robins bring
The lasting summer of the South,
The rose upon the heart and mouth.

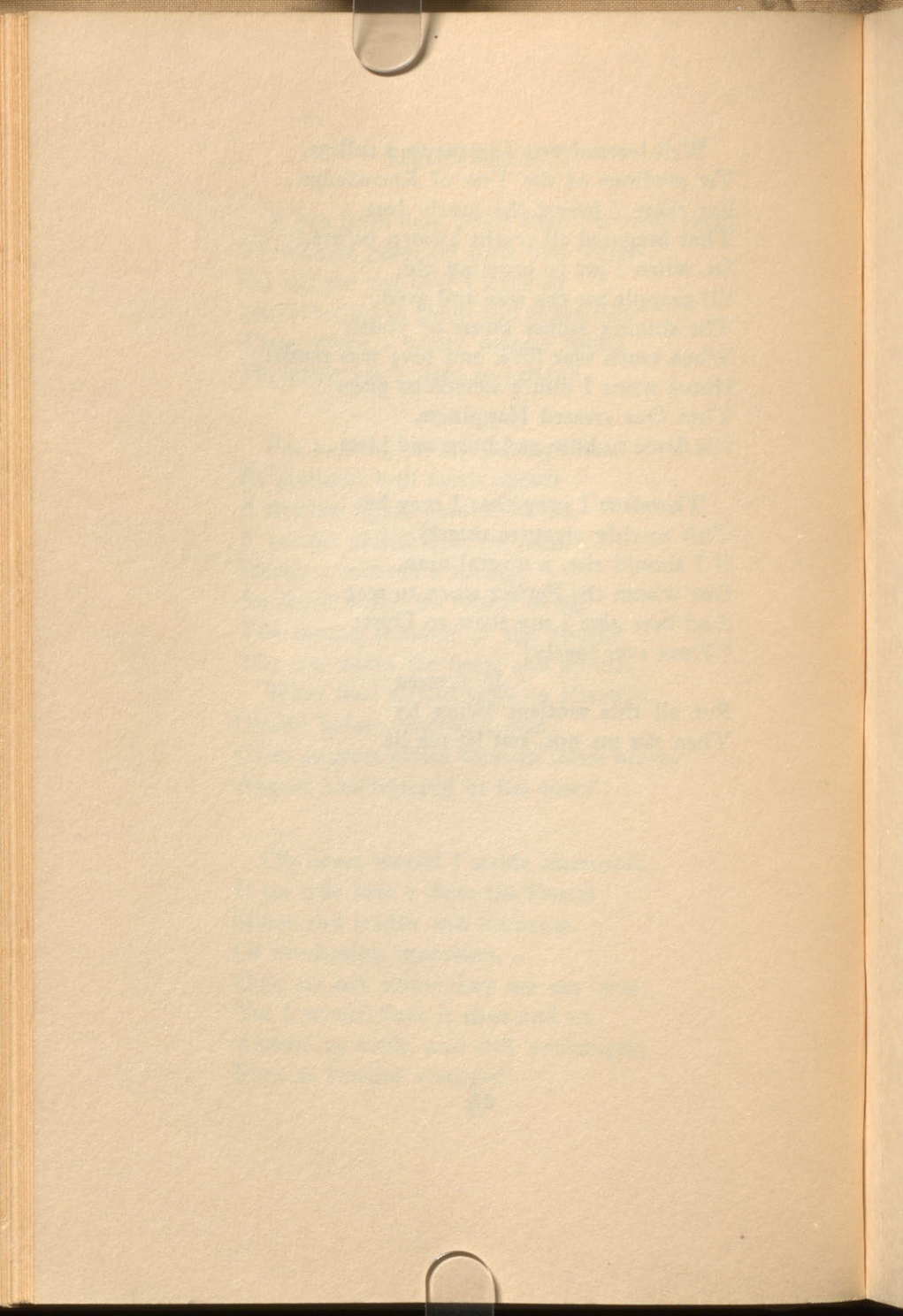
What fool would walk in Paradise
Gladly before immortal eyes
Calm as great plates beneath those brows
August and tranquil as the cows'?

Oh never would I stride immortal,
If on true love I close the Portal
Silent and leaden and immense
Of everlasting innocence.
Give me my sins—they are my woe,
Yet I would have it thus and so,
Altered no whit, and still unchanged,
Even as Lucifer arranged.

Well learned was I in many a college,
Yet studious of the Tree of Knowledge,
For there I found the lovely lore
That beggared all truths known before.
So, when I get to growing old,
I'll grapple me the rose and gold,
The shining amber hours of youth
When truth was love, and love was truth;
Hours when I dimly seemed to guess
That One created Happiness,
His flame to bow and burn and bless

Therefore I pray that I may be
This earthly creature utterly
If I should rise, a mortal man,
One whom the Perfect scorn to scan.
And here give I my toast to Dust:
"Twas ever lovely!"

 If I must
Put all this sentient Being by
Then stir me not, but let me lie.



IV
SONNETS TO ELEANORA

(A SEQUENCE)

I—XXI

("BUT THY ETERNAL SUMMER SHALL NOT FADE")

1929—1937

I

I sing of love, that sweet translating power
Whose wand, having lightly touched the urchin, life,
Makes him a king for one ecstatic hour
Wielding a sword invincible in strife.

I sing of beauty that awakens love
Creating wonder in the place of void,
Wonder that would the strength of mountains move
And joy that hath earth's emperors destroyed.

I sing of one whose storied grace inspires
With beauty all the ardour love may know,
Whose memory stirs deep unwonted fires
And lights within me some eternal glow,
Bidding me give life's night this answering dawn
To tell the world of us when we are gone.

II

Call me not fickle, nor berate my heart
For having sung of love in every guise;
Term me no traitor whose impulsive art
Sought consolation under any skies.
For none of these am I; I did but gaze
Brief moments on the lovelier stars of night;
One Empress rules my tenebrous strange ways.
And she will rest my undiminished light.

Often I gave my heart, until I found
It was not ever mine to give, but whole
Remained; a pilgrim seeking holy ground,
Whose secret orisons revealed his soul.

Thrice round the Systems let Fate carry me,
From my true Sun I never can be free.

III

This is my life, this artistry in words,
For saving this, I have no gifts to give;
As some proud warrior who his armour girds,
I shape my thoughts to make their beauty live.
When I am clay, the reason for my breath
Must rest in these; if they have any worth
I shall outrun the envious courier Death
And walk forever young upon the earth.

This is my self, my one immortal hue,
And this the single flame with which I burn,
But I would yield it up entire to you,
If my great love you would as great return.

Yet if we might combine these precious powers,
The centuries would be our servient hours.

IV

When I am overborne with hooded fears
That I before the harvest-tide must fall,
Before my thoughts wave high their golden spears
In beauty's strong defiance fronting all,
When in the hours of close-confining night
I face the darkness with unspoken dread,
Fearing the best of me will know no light
(For, who will guess my thoughts when I am dead?),

'Tis then my better wisdom doth renew
The truth that, should my verses all be burned,
The glory, once, of having worshipped you
Would keep my dust in beauty's censer urned
Until at last Earth's hand of me disposes
To rise in springtime upward into roses.

V

If men could tell the realm that they call heaven
 And hands translate the wonder eyes have seen,
 If genius held a power sevenfold seven
 Or time relive great hours that once have been,
 Then I could tell the love I bear for you
 And how surpassing beautiful you are,
 But words fall short of these, for words are new,
 While love and beauty came with heaven's first star.

I might say gold was onyx to your hair
 And marry sky and sea to suit your eyes,
 Yet never tell the radiance dwelling there;
 Though love's be beauty's priest, these are no lies.
 So I'll be silent save within this art
 That lights for me one candle in your heart.

VI

O my beloved, your golden loveliness
 Draws such an amber veil across my dreams,
 That where you lie and light the wilderness
 And where your sleep is girt with singing streams,
 I come, bend low in midnight's silence deep,
 And like the lonely shadow of a pine,
 Sway with the wind, in moonlight half-asleep,
 Lulled by the slumber of a presence divine.

I shall be whispering gently when the wind
 Steals through the casement of your dreams, and I
 Shall in the soft dark summer rain remind
 You that my night is lonely as the sky.

I shall be all of these, since I cannot
 Attain the glory of your waking thought.

VII

There is no lovely thing that I behold
That does not bring your beauty unto me;
Your hair floats wanton through the sunset's gold,
Your eyes are morning heavens and summer sea.
You are a part of all earth's loveliness,
And wakened Helen walks her ways of old
Where your white footsteps wander and impress
Their whiteness on the grasses of the wold.

You are a perfect rose, unopened yet,
Far, far away, still dreaming in the dark,
Crowned with pale fire, and I cannot forget
Your quiet glory whose one precious spark
Falling in silence on a poet's hearth
Has left him singing to the listening earth.

VIII

When royal and serene, with white sails spread,
You drift beyond this deep and dubious tide
And anchor off the gray wharves of the dead
Shewing them beauty that will long abide,
I promise you, my lovelier-than-fair,
That these dark envious dead will see you pass
Golden by night, the halo of your hair
Above their granite pillars on the grass.

I shall be sleeping then with poets past,
Whose dust the winds and waters bear away,
Whose pondered songs in beauty shall outlast
The slow relentless turn of night and day;
And having for its pattern one so pure,
Lovely and wise, my song must needs endure.

IX

Does love live on forever when we die
Or does it cease with this dissolving form,—
Or soaring far through death's uncharted sky
Above the darkness and the thundering storm,
Does that full flame which has outborne the night
Drive on forever?—Oh, it must, or we
Make for eternal shadow this best light,
For the abyss our brightest ecstasy.

Our dreams that vault beyond this mortal sphere,
High as the kingly rainbow over earth
Prove best some true completion far from here
Where men assume a dimly-visioned worth.

There, cleansed of dross, I'll speak and tell you of
A wandering mortal's worship and his love.

X

Westward away, a thousand miles from you,
I think sometimes that we shall meet no more,
No more to give your beauty homage due,
Wonder in pensive silence and adore,
Hoping you sense the love I leave unsaid
As feels the moon the moving of the tide
Far out at sea, drawing from their still bed
A wealth of sorrows that unmeaning ride.

So, causelessly, a candle in your hand,
You pace the shadowed passways of my heart,
Try here and there a door, gently demand
What dreams rive man's world-weary rest apart—

Ah, if you knew, you'd leave him to his sleep
Beyond all joy and sorrow, dark as deep.

XI

Why do I write these lines? That we may pass
Freely beyond the tyrannous hands of time,
And year by year see shadowed in his glass
Your beauty and my youth that were sublime.
Your glory and my ardour shall live on
Unchanged forever, unforgotten flame,
Since here, renewed by every glowing dawn,
We give to them Art's everlasting frame.

And when life darkens, when the future holds
You cradled in dull comfort, and you know
That I've gone back to bitterness, your golds
Have paler grown in many a passing snow,
You'll read these lines, and whisper, strangely moved:
"Then I was lovely, then a poet loved."

XII

We two have wandered all earth's lovely places
In my sweet times of solitude, when powers
Of lonely dream revealed mysterious faces
In the evanescent beauty of these hours:

Somewhere off Capri, and in ancient times
We drifted . . . and on windy English hills
In mediaeval days I made you rhymes . . .
In southern Edens once, palm-shadowed rills
Sang back the ageless music of our love . . .
Forever on we voyaged . . . stars the while
Conspired in kindly benison above
This ghostly rapture time could not defile . . .

Alone I have this misty anchor cast
To find that it holds nothing at the last.

XIII

My father Darkness, and my mother Earth,
Of casual clay, in mystery begotten,
Death my pale bride ordained, even at birth,—
All that I am were easily forgotten.

Through this dark forest I, a traveller, come,
But see afar where silver water shimmers,
And I forget my drear and destined home
While love's bright kingdom in the moonlight glimmers.

Thereward I journey, where the long surge dies
Plangent in rollers borne from faery seas,
For magic rides abroad in all the skies,
Stars fall, and I have found me one of these,—
And he who tips life's lance with love's bright star
Scorns those deep caverns where old dragons are.

XIV

BRAEMORE GARDEN

Here is the lovely garden of my heart,
And here the thousand thoughts sown far away
In darkling hours with lonely-vigilled art
Spring to full blossom on this radiant day.
The golden August light, the cool soft wind,
The boughs that whisper, and the sun-steeped sward,
The little darting creatures of the wood,
The elfin joys that dance within my mind
Seem here united in a rich reward,
A wild sweet song that flames along my blood
What matter if 'tis spun of transient stuff
Passing with sunset and returning never?
This all-eternal moment is enough
To hide away the yearning years forever.
Toronto, 1929.

XV

THE HUMBER RIVER

When red October mantled all the hills
And autumn's golden train went sweeping by,
When all the land was glorious, our wills
Borrowed this mournful splendour that must die.
The endless lyric chaunting of the river
Drew us more close than we shall be again—
O river-song, go hence from me forever!
And sound no more in sunlight or in rain.

Agnes will rise and pass, stars gleam and fall,
Rivers sing on in beauty to the sea,
And yet for us these verses will be all
Remaining of a sacred mystery.

I never knew your love, and yet I know
It is sufficient to have loved you so.

XVI

POSTLUDE

As some fair ghost comes walking, long years after
Her lovely life, those halls bright with her fame,
You tread my thoughts with sighs as light as laughter,
Kindling my heart with your remembered name.
I would forget you, gladly, if I could,
Completely as you have forgotten me,
Forget I loved you, and that once my blood
Leapt forth to meet you, strong and fond and free.

Life's bell, my books, my candle cannot ban
The lightness of your coming, but your hand
Sows heavy sorrows where our laughter ran,
Like white November's frost upon the land.

Unlike the good brown earth, no magic wing
Fans my cold face and whispers second spring.

1929.

XVII

SEVEN YEARS AFTER

Last night my long-dead love came back to me
Smiling across the purple fields of sleep,
Imperious and serene, as fair to see
As in our far-off love-time; eyes that keep
Their summer-quiet azure as of old,
Frank as the heavens mirrored there in twain;
Still shone her hair, a casque of brightest gold,
Fragrant her loveliness as soft spring rain.

I felt as some poor novice in his cell
Kneeling night-long upon the rugged stone,
Lips lost in invocation, hands in prayer,
His eyes on one white star as in a spell,
And suddenly, toward dawning, rapt, alone:
The Vision vouchsafed, the Virgin standing there!
March, 1936.

XVIII

Some other year when spring lights up again
Her glad green glow for all the waiting world,
And in the moon of May a wild white rain
Of blossoms in a thousand orchards swirled
Like incense on the vineland's rich red earth,—
Some other year 'twill come, and I'll not see
Nor hear, nor know this miracle of birth,
And all of beauty will be done for me.

Shall I remember in the house of death
Something of spring? For in dead life I feel
Something of you remembered, like the breath
Of timeless April as the seasons wheel.

All memory and hope in this I give,
That love and spring from this may sing and live.

XIX

In this far year the woman in you dies,
A death of time, a burial beneath the years;
To say you live and walk were hollow lies,
You move no more my joyousness or tears.
Only there lives that yet-mysterious power
You waked in me, tended, and kept so long,
Kindling at will a world-without-end hour,
Like the rich dawn that stirs the bird's first song.

I have walked far this quiet common vale,
So far I half-forget those sun-drenched peaks
That once we scaled together: a true tale
Of strange awakening that the lost heart seeks;
And even your ghostly image, years away,
Gowns this bare night in splendour like the day.

XX

Forever and forever, dear, you pass
Beyond the last horizon, joining youth
In dim lost kingdoms shadowed in the glass
Where time resolves those dreams we saw as truth.
Wonder it was to love you,—yet 'twas more
To stretch those wings you fastened to my soul,
And to my outflung spirit unbarred the door
That let me see the truth and see it whole,
The final truth that reason is a jest,
Cold logic foolish, and the groping mind
An unlit passage to those last and best
Of ecstasies irresolute as the wind.

There, far beyond all mortal gifts I see
The power of vision that our dream set free.
July, 1936.

XXI

Once and again, my ever-lovely love,
Still unforgotten, unforgettable,
Like some smooth shining stone that soars above
The washing seas of time regrettable,
So great a glory and so fond a glow
Your distant voice renews and wakes in me!
Thus to have worshipped is so rich, I know,
Its own resplendence scarcely dares to be.

'Tis better far that all the love was mine,
The long devotion that shall not grow old;
We never drew the rainbow wings of dream
Down in the mire of days. We kept this shrine
Inviolate, of renunciation's gold,
And of this love not death shall end the theme.

October, 1937.

V
ODES AND ELEGIES

ODE FOR DOMINION DAY

I

When Cartier first saw Hochelaga's height
And on Mount Royal reared the fleur-de-lys,
When dawn swept down the age-long savage night,
Was Canada conceived in majesty.

God, keep within us yet that dauntless flame
Of old courageous days,

When hearts were stout and hands were truly strong;
Of those who from the valorous centuries came,

Still let us stride the ways,

And tribulation never shall be long!

O Canada, unveil for us the splendid past,

That thy first glorious hours may sanctify these last.

II

That we might wear this present nationhood,
Daulac drew sword, and sought Death to the end;
For us Brock gave an English hero's blood,
And dark Tecumseh did our fields defend.

Far on the veldt, and on the crimsoned Somme

New generations proved

The Empire free as their Canadian home.

Now over many a field the stars are calm

Where heroes sleep beloved,

And there Remembrance shall for ever come.

These are our heritage, and these our rightful pride;

God grant that we may live as nobly as they died.

III

The hero's deed, the lonely poet's theme
Enshrine a nation's greatness—these we have,
A strange magnificence of deed and dream
That mocks the years and burns above the grave;
 England and France flow kindred in one vein,
 The dreaming Celt and Scot,
 The Norseman all his sea-born valour brings,
 The magic melancholy of the Ukraine,—
 All these are subtly wrought
In one vast anthem our Dominion sings:
From ancient kingdoms' hopes a People shall arise
To write their steadfast faiths across the Western skies.

IV

We are a people marching down the ages,
O'er golden seas, beyond the mountains' crest;
Our legacy of warriors, bards and sages
Shall guide us still on truth's and beauty's quest.
 God, let our dreams be deep, our deeds be fair,
 And let our spirits be
 Imbued with all that was, that future time
 Shall see a new Dominion which will dare,
 For right and liberty,
 Attain new peaks and victories more sublime.
My country, Canada, land of auspicious birth,
Arise, and let thy youth inspire the lands of Earth!

Winnipeg, June, 1929.

CANADA

I have seen her in the quiet of the evening in the fields,
I have sensed her in the dusk-time that the star-decked
prairie yields;
She has poised on purple mountains when my lonely
step drew near,
When the North's green fires at midnight were her altar-
lights austere.

Her voice is in the thunder of the raptured Falls of Bow,
In the memory of Daulac dying greatly long ago.
I have heard her in the chanting of awakened April
rills,
She whose spirit walked with Lampman on his silent
wooded hills.

In the ancient lonely churchyards of the pioneers asleep,
She broods in voiceless twilight where eternal memories
creep;
Where the dark heroic headlands front the wintry
ocean's roar
She sits, thinking of the seamen who will come to port
no more.

On the red earth of the vinelands, through the orchards
in the spring
She walks and feels with heart and hand her beauty's
blossoming—
And again she wanders weeping beneath an alien sky
Where her many sons are sleeping, and her young lost
legions lie.

✓
She is one with all our gladness, with our wonder and
our pain

Living everywhere triumphant in the heart and soul
and brain,

She our mother, we who bore her, she the daughter yet
to be

Who walks these mortal roads of death to immortality.

Indivisible and lovely is the maiden of our thought,
She, the empress robed in beauty from our deepest
dreaming wrought,

She whose centuries are storied, whose young banners
far outborne

Are the heralds of a splendour in the ages yet unborn.

Banff, Sept. 1928.

ODE ON THE DEATH OF GEORGE V

I

The King is dead—now Death is Emperor,
That ghostly Regent in his sable crown;
And he who held the seven seas before
 Has meetly bowed him down
To God, who rules, not lands, but night and day,
Neither in passive, nor in sad submission,
But as in homage to the fixed condition
Of Him who turns the planets 'neath His sway;
 To Whom we kneeling, pray:
“God save the King, the mighty King that was!
For all that throne or crown or sceptre does
Moves at Thy bidding. Even the proudest breath
Is shortened swift and soon by Thy dark courier,
 Death.”

II

Our King was great, yet void of vanity,
Loved all earth's peoples, above all, his own,
Gifted in judgment, tenderness and sanity
 That made his well-loved throne
Foremost among fair nations; yet a King
Who was a calm great-hearted gentleman,
Who dared be gentle as the greatest can;
Aye, never did he one unworthy thing.
 Now we this laurel bring
For one who wore and honoured even his crown,
Gravely assumed, and greatly laid it down,
Glad, yet unwearied, knowing well his time
Had come to enter in a quiet ampler clime.

III

No sable panoply is needful now,
No deeply-muffled drum, nor minute-gun,
When darkly waves the plume on England's brow—

For now her foremost son
Departs from her, and his imperial tread
Attended by an Empire's mourning far,
Re-echoing faint from some mysterious star,
Drums hollow down the highways of the dead,
Sounding in august dread.

Let us be heartened, burdened not by fear;
There wakes the Immortal who was mortal here.
His kindliness, simplicity and strength
Blow slowly on before his long last journey's length.

IV

He was a goodly King, whom joy will find
In that dim realm beyond the shadowy tide.
Passing alone, he will not wander blind

Where royal hearts abide,
That splendent host of England's Queens and Kings!
The Saxon Harold, English Alfred there,
The Lion-Richard, Warrior-Henry stare
At inward scars the latest hero brings,

Telling of sternest things,
Of times when monarchs and fanatic lords
Ravening for godship, perished on their swords.
Pale armies marched, and sorrowing he stood
The foe of evil and the steadfast friend of good.

V

Grant him Thy peace, Thou Guardian of all thrones,
Whose footsteps stride the mountains, span the sea,
Whose hand hath fixed the chill and burning zones,
Who art Infinity.

Grant him the shelter of Thine outspread wings;
He showed that kings were men, but only Thou
With pale avenging suns about Thy brow
Inspirest every heart that stirs and sings—

Thou makest all true men kings!
Teach us to follow Thee, in greatness mild,
In true nobility, still undefiled,
Beloved as he, our most illustrious Dead
Who wakes with richer crowns about his honoured
head.

January, 1936.

TO THE SINGER ASLEEP

(FOR BLISS CARMAN)

Not in the mortal transience of our thought
Or in the hollow caverns of the heart
He lives, for he a true memorial wrought:
The selflessness of high enduring art.
He raised his eyes, and here
Saw in the sunrise all we could not see,
Heard in the wind the Voice we could not hear,
And sang aloud and clear
Our great and inarticulate ecstasy.

This was a singer who gave back to earth
That gift received at birth,
The elemental glory of the stars.
He, over flame entrusted to his keeping,
Above the cruel bright bars
Watched vigil, while the lesser world lay sleeping,
That after him might glow—when all was done,
When he lay robed with night—
For other eyes perpetual star and sun,
The lyric fire of everlasting light.

AVE ATQUE VALE

(FOR WALTER F. PAYNE OF THE "MANITOBA FREE
PRESS.")

Over the hill, and over, one by one,
Far out beyond the cold stars' diadem
Our friends depart, to sleep beyond the sun,
And he, the kindest, journeys on with them.

Onward they pass, the lovely and the brave,
Down hollow-sounding highways, out of ken,
And most remembered he will be, who gave
The wine of his good life to fellow-men.

For over him Death wields no stilling power,
While, like a low sweet song of perfect art,
The memory of his life's serene fair hour
Lingers forever within the listening heart.

TO MY COMRADES DYING YOUNG

(H.V.S., F.M.J., J.C.D., J.A.)

Sweet Elegy, whose deep full tones are heard
Seldom to touch the raucous present's ear
With solace of high thought and noble word,
Lift this immediate sorrow
To thy magnificent enduring bier,
And then with accents clear,
Bid these mount up to their triumphant morrow.

Speak for me now, sweet Elegy, and be
The very crystal fountain of high truth;
Though bedded dark in deeps of misery
Be here the voice of youth,
And with no tongue uncouth
Tell the completion that might well have been,
When crowned with bays of age,
Honoured by eld and sage,
These youths had played life's splendid final scene.

That heavenly Artist whose almighty Hand
Createth sunset, dawn and destiny,
Drawing new wonders wide on every strand
And thundering forth His sunrise on the sea,
Bent here with curious stroke,
Ending each work as it seemed best to be.

'Tis no poor triumph thus to pass forever
On youth's strong wings that seem forever bright,
Reddening in morning's light,

To rise above this fen of care, and ever
Soar as the singing lark beyond our sight
Who pours his anthem back from realms where never
 Fall sorrow, storm or night.

It is not granted us to know, but we
Vaguely yet surely sense the wisdom hid
Deep in the surgings of the fellest sea;
What has been done, we dimly feel One did
To veil that mighty Happiness to be
 In coming joyful days
 When His mysterious ways
Will burn with light for clouded eyes to see.

My comrades, should I mourn your passing now,
I who toil on, and joyfully remember
The unwithered laurel still about each brow,
The flaming torch that left no mocking ember?
Deep in your hearts, fair caskets never forced,
You have returned, to Him who gave, your dreams
Unsullied, with but half their orbits coursed,
Bright as the summer stars' clear-silvered beams.

No callous earthy touch, no shearing fates
Have clipped the roses that were your ideals;
Pale disillusion never knew your gates,
Nor bitter failure marked you with her seals;
 These scars my own heart feels,
The singer deemed unworthy of his hire,
The world's dark ashes shrouding up his fire.

The dreams of youth! the passionate dreams of youth!
 A brighter galaxy are these than all
The glistening hosts of heaven, for the truth

Lingers, a lovely princess, at their call
And many a magic lute
Is plucked for her before the shadows fall.
Only from darkness can the dreamer tell
Faith's lost intensity; then doth he know
How rich those hearts whose spell
Remained unbroken as fresh-fallen snow.

Mourn not these comrades who, in touching life,
Let not life touch them in her perilous way,
But from their brief strong entry into strife
Bore precious palms away
Out of this slow grim fight to nobler day.

They have no need to fear the questions dread
Age asks of its dull self: *'What has been done?
When this long scroll is read,
What record here of any glory won?
For what great deed was spent this wealth of sun?
Where are those feats that once youth promised? . . .'*
These touch them not, for facing time's blind will,
They bore youth's standard to the topmost hill.

There is a Country far beyond the tide,
A place of quiet, and of steadfast joy
Where youthful hearts abide,
Beyond life's lowering and uncertain sky,
Where star and flower, field and sea
Wear beauties of eternity,
And when at last the darkening veils divide,
To rest the spent wings glide,
From life and death set free,
I shall attain their early liberty.

FRAGMENT ON A PICTURE OF PAOLO AND
FRANCESCA

*"Then with her lovely lippes Francesca kiss'd
Her lover dede. . . ."*

On him she laid
Her sweet full nakedness of precious warmth.
He never stirred—then dead was all of him.
Her finger-tip could fire him in this life
And now,—not the full wine of her sweet body
Moved his eye-lid. Paolo, insensate clay?
The voice that was the music of her life
Dead, empty, speechless made forevermore —
His eyes beneath the lids she gently raised
Were rich unseeing stones, and that deep light
Which is the very centre of the soul,
Forever quenched. Those eyes, strange oceans where
Her spirit voyaged on the sails of love,
Returned no fire that she poured into them.
Not Paolo this! a marble god of him,
Perfectly carven as her living love,
The soul's fair temple with its godhead fled,
A matchless mansion all-untenanted;
Alive she lay on Paolo lying dead.

1928.

ODE TO SHELLEY

(written in the year 1929)

I

O wild strange Spirit of the silver wings!
Eternal Star whose brightness ever grows,
Ecstatic Voice whose vibrant music sings

Forever onward as time's tempest blows,
Smiting great generations in their train,
The proud green laurel with the dark red rose,—

Wake, joyous Spirit, wake in me again
Youth's ardent glory and the passionate fire
That makes a living radiance of the brain

And thrills anew the long-forgotten lyre!
O let me hear thee over this loud moan
Of life's unquiet sea. Come thou, inspire

My heart to songs that shall not die unknown
If they are sung for thee and me alone.

II

For one who would be selfless as thou wast
There's nothing left in life save lovely dreams.
The search for beauty hath a killing cost;

Her shallop floats no more on mortal streams,
For she is one with thee and Keats and Brooke,
Young hearts enraptured, whose brief morning-beams

Outshine ten thousand sunsets: Ye who took
Life's brimming cup in eager hands and drained
In one glad draught the wine that men forsook

For heavy mockeries, and nothing gained.
Few days ye chose, and greatly these were passed,
A swift mortality from which remained

Youth's fresh eternity whose marvels last,
An envious present kneeling to the past.

III

Thy soul, a great strange opal, lay unfound
In immemorial chasms until one day
Men halted, darkling, on that sacred ground,

Found thee, saw myriad sun and moon-fires play
In million-coloured wonder on thy mind,
Whose magic crystal broke the Light's white ray

In rainbow-flames of rose and gold, designed
To glow on violet and emerald seas;
Until thou camest, to colour we were blind.

Twilight and dawn we knew, but dimly, these
Splendours of heaven and ocean; till thy birth
Pale gods and goddesses slept on their frieze.

There was no mirror for the hues of earth.
O come again and paint us all their mirth!

IV

If only I were fortunate as thou
Unbound from poverty's Prometheian chains,
Safe from the vulture dread that rends me now—

Then would I thrill these coming April rains,
Sing like their liquid silver on the leaves,
Translate the sudden spring-tide in my veins,

Even as the homing birds upon the eaves,
To feel my heart, a blithe new-opened bud,
Stirred by the warmth that waking Earth receives.

O give me then such madness in my blood
Bidding me live a poet, blest or no,
A wave that sings, though drowned in life's dark flood:

Lost songs are sweeter than all song we know,
The unseen seed than fairest flowers that blow.

V

I would be free forever, count the price
Of suffering for such freedom high reward,
Scorn all man's petty standards that entice

Him to his hollow gold and rusted shard.
Power and wealth be his.—My idols blest
Are thine, bright Spirit, Love and Song. No bard

For other ware takes up this perilous quest.
O make it mine forever! In the night
Chide my misgivings, and my soul oppressed

Bear up with thee to heaven's starry height.
As once the Wind made thee its inmost part,
Its voice, its essence, and prophetic might,

So draw me toward that lonely glorious art
Whose timeless temple is the human heart.

ODE WRITTEN IN SOLITUDE

I

Beyond my study window in the night
I hear the beating of mysterious wings,
But when the day brings back its hollow light
The roar of life slays every dream that sings.
Why do my dreams, my songs not give to me
The needful blessing of material bread,
Which even the basest gather as their own?

O Beauty, can it be
That I have found the Joy from which men fled,
Or do I bow before an empty throne?

II

O splendid idol, Beauty, I have bowed
So long before thine altar that it seems
Mine is a separate spirit, truly vowed
To serve and journey on a geste of dreams.
I have neglected all the mortal dues
Men pay to life, only, to be alive;
I have forgotten all their ways to flower
On gaudy springs men choose;
My deepening autumn is the time they thrive,
My harvest-tide their void and fruitless hour.

III

Why is the poet set apart from men?
Why is his road so lonely and so bleak?
Why fares he forth, not to return again?
Why his great joy the task no others seek?

Thankless the Quest and bitter is the way,
Winding the road with mockery for him;
To most his fruit is ashes, grief his crown,
 Lonely as Death his way,
Dark is the path, and all its turnings dim,
And yet he dare not lay his bright sword down.

IV

How sweet to dream afar with god-like spirits
Who sense the beauties hid beyond the night!
How sad to wake to all the flesh inherits
As its inevitable piteous blight!
If circumstance has fixed his feet in clay,
What matters the bright torch that lights his soul?
What if his heart be lost in *Avalon*,
 His dreams in far Cathay,
His thoughts on Helen's lips, a fabulous goal—
When he awakens, these must all be gone.

V

Call him no idler—he has deeds to do,
Tasks all invisible, silences to hear,
Deep wondrous seas for sailing with some few
Who know of soundings, and like children peer
Strangely at sky and ocean. He must seek
To guess the silver mystery of the stars,
To see God's face within His frailest flower,
 To sleep while others wake,
And from those dreams bring back strange avatars
That bind eternity within an hour.
May, 1932.

PROMETHEUS

I am the child of all the weeping ages,
The pigmy bearer of earth's giant woes,
A driven atom, ever overburdened,
Crawling across the unending page of time,
And yet no god dare mock my harried way,
For I am Man. . . . In history's strange glass,
Wherein all things assume their rightful form,
Darkly I tower against the shrouding gloom,
Bowed yet gigantic, in an epic shape
Stumbling toward my grim and ultimate end.

Upon my shoulders, shaming Atlas, I
Bear not the feathery world, but its stone sorrows;
And this same burden, in vast outline seen,
Makes me appear the hugest work of God,
Crouched and heroic, shutting out the sun,
No wide-winged angel shadowed in his fane,
Great pinions spread in calm beatitude,
Attains the height of my divinity.

1929.

AN ODE FOR TORONTO'S CENTENARY

(1834-1934)

I

Time's trumpet sounds.—And now a hundred years
Fall like a garment cast, and falling, show
The shape of generations. Now one hears
Vast chords reverberant. A thunderous glow
Kindles the western heaven of the past.
'Tis now we stand revealed to history's gaze:
What we have done and are, all eyes must see;
What has our toil amassed?
The deeds of thrice ten thousand marching days
Our true account and heritage will be.

II

A hundred winters left their grief and frost;
A hundred springs renewed our burgeoning hopes;
A hundred summers smiled; a scarlet host,
Indian autumns incarnadined our slopes.
Humber and Don have seen heroic hours
Since little York, midway between her streams,
First stirred to fame's slow summons and awoke.
'Tis now that small seed flowers,
Now wakes the day from vague ancestral dreams!
Now roars the furnace from the tepee's smoke!

III

Where rugged forts and cabins lined our shores,
Great minsters tower, reared to the god of gold,
And though their might and grandeur none deplores,
By no such triumph is our saga told.
Deep in the hearts of long-forgotten men,
Deep in the dreams of many a mouldered name,
And from no garish flaunting of the proud,
 Old annals glow again
To show a hundred valorous years aflame,
Brightened by men with homely worth endowed.

IV

We are not free, not yet from ancient flaws
Which still disfigure civic virtue's face;
When avarice weaves the hemp into our laws
Matthews and Lount still hang in the market-place.
First of our leaders, brave Mackenzie cried:
"We will be free!"—Still must that echo ring
And fling its wakening clarion to the blast
 When agile tongues have lied
Or used the altar as a step to bring
The golden rose of fame to earth at last.

V

Let us become a People who are known
For worth and civic character; let these
With intellect and honesty alone
Decide and clothe our great ones, pure degrees

Beyond the academic alphabet.
Let no fierce tumult sound until we weigh
The worth of whom we honour. Let us be
Slow to acclaim, and yet
Slow to forget true greatness, which will stay,
Where well remembered, bright eternally.

VI

Our eyes that see this present splendour shine
Will not behold a second come to birth,
For when the next unfolds its strange design
We shall be one with this, our parent earth.
Then, since we may not deck that far, fair time,
Let us by present deeds erect great years
For unborn generations' feet to tread,
That they may say: "Sublime
Were our forefathers' days, for time endears
Their names to us."—Thus let our praise be said.

November, 1934.

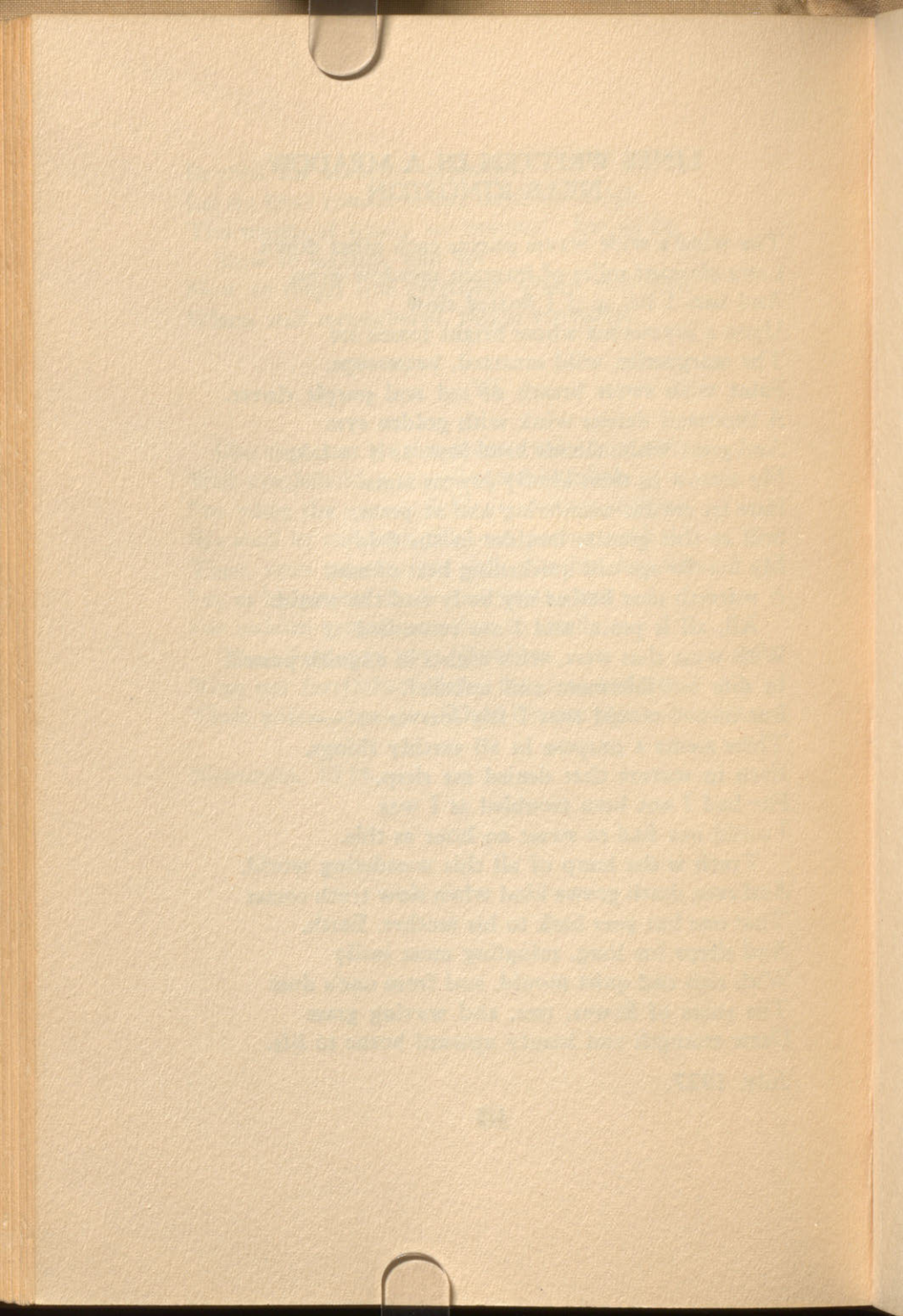
LINES WRITTEN IN A MEADOW
NEAR KINGSTON

The wind's wide waves pursue each other down
Long pleasant miles of fragrant meadow-grass
And here I lie, as if I floated slow
Upon a joyous sea whose bright foams are
The marguerite, wild mustard, buttercups,
Faint with sweet breath of red and purple clover.
A thousand daisies wink with golden eyes
And great white clouds bend low, as if to take
My sorrow in their kindly joyous arms.
Here let me lie, unmoving and at peace,
Still as this granite boulder in the field;
My fire the age-old quickening heat of sun,
A warmth that bathes my body and the world.

All, all is peace, and I am reconciled
With woes that were, with nights in anguish passed,
In dim bewilderment and unbelief,
But now—would that I felt forever so!—
There seems a purpose in all earthly things,
Even in torture that denied me sleep,
For had I not been troubled as I was
I could not find so sweet an hour as this.

Truth is the lamp of all this wondering world,
And even death grows kind when slow truth comes
That one but goes back to his mother, Earth,
And sleeps for long, mingling most easily
With rich and quiet mould, and from one's dust
The roots of flower, tree, and waving grass
Draw strength and beauty upward borne to life.

July, 1927.



IV
TRANSLATIONS

LE SONNET D'ARVERS

A secret in my soul, a mystery
Broods o'er my life: an everlasting love
Full-blown in one sweet moment, yet must be
Kept ever from her, who knows nothing of
This joy she made. I pass her all unseen,
So near her always, always quite alone,
And silent till the end I shall have been;
I dare ask nothing; nothing have I won.

And she, though God has made her kind and sweet,
Walks heedless, and hears not about her feet
Love's little murmuring stream from my heart stirred.

Piously faithful, to her duties true
She will read this, which from her beauty grew,
And ask: "Why, who is this?" nor guess one word.

THE SHIP OF GOLD

(FROM THE FRENCH OF EMILE NÉLLIGAN)

It was a golden Galleon, sculptured from massive gold:
Her masts rose high as heaven, above uncharted seas;
Love's Mermaid, bright hair streaming, rode bare-
limbed on the breeze
Stretched shining at the prow, with golden sun in-
scroll'd.

One night that splendid Galleon struck on a great
reef's gloom
That crouched in treacherous Ocean, where deep a Siren
sang,
And slow the ghastly wreckage, whose knell the Nereids
rang,
Keeled down into the darkness, the vast unanswering
Tomb.

That was a golden Galleon, whose bright transparent
side
Revealed her glittering treasures, that hands profane
divide,
The hands of evil seamen, Scorn, Hate, and Terrors
twain.

And after that brief tempest, what floats, what bitter
gleam
Of that deserted derelict, my heart that broke in vain?,
Alas! it plumbs forever the deep abyss of Dream!

THE SLEEP OF BOAZ

(FROM VICTOR HUGO'S "BOOZ ENDORMI")

Boaz had lain him down, wearied in heart and brain,
Weary from daylong toil in his broad acres' space;
Now he had sought his couch in its accustomed place
And slept beside the bins brimful with golden grain.

Great rolling fields of corn were fruitful in his name,
And though great wealth was his, he strove for justice
still;

No earth was in the stream that turned his righteous
mill,

And in his heart's bright forge there burned no bitter
flame.

Silver as April streams his noble beard and head,
And in his sheaf there was no avarice nor hate;
When some poor gleaner passed the old man wandering
late,

"Put more grain in her sheaf," the kindly patriarch said.

Far from all twisted paths this pure man kept his way
Clad in clear honesty like linen fine and white,
And flowing toward the poor, his sacks by day and
night

Seemed open fountains freed to water life's sad way.

A kinsman true was Boaz, a lord of humble state
Most generous to all, yet wise in every plan;
The women loved him more than many a younger man,
For though the youth be fair, the patriarch is great.

The sage, who turns him back to where all things are
bright,
Enters eternal days and leaves life's changeful hours;
And though in youthful eyes one sees a flame that
towers
The venerable eye is overbrimmed with light.

Now Boaz slept each night, according to his ways,
Among his men who lay beside the worn old mill;
The sleeping harvesters in sombre groups lay still,
And this deep silence fell in very ancient days.

A great judge ruled as chief the tribes of Israel;
The land, where nomads lived, each in his wanderer's
tent
Fearful of giants' feet, whereof they saw the print,
Was wet and soft from times when the great Deluge
fell.

As Father Jacob slept, as Judith laid her down,
Old Boaz closed his eyes and slept beneath the leaves,
The Gate of Heaven on high swung wide above his
sheaves
And high above his head a vision floated down.

The vision that Boaz saw: a lordly oak whose pride
Arose from his aged loins, and mounting to the sky,
Bore up a mighty race who steadfast marched on high,
Their last a king who sang, their first a God who died.

Full gently Boaz spoke, his soul in wonderment:
"How could this come of me, I who have only fears?
My sands of time have run for more than eighty years,
But I can boast no son, no woman in my tent.

And long ago the one with whom I long did live
Has left, O Lord, my couch to rest in Heaven with Thee,
Yet I am still with her, and still she seems with me,
I living half in death, while she is half alive.

A race arise from me? How could such marvel be?
How could a son be mine in anything but dream?
The mornings in our youth are miracles that gleam
And day awakes from night in splendid victory!

I quiver deep in age like a birch in winter's dread,
A widower, alone, I feel the evening's gloom,
And now I bend, my God, my brow toward the tomb,
A thirsty ox who turns lakeward his weary head."

In ecstasy and dream these words he did repeat
Turning to God his eyes, which sleep did all but close:
The cedar at its base feels not the creeping rose,
And Boaz did not feel a damsel at his feet.

While he was slumbering there, the Moabitess Ruth
Had lain down at his feet, her lovely bosom bare,
In hope some unknown ray would bless her lying there
When he awoke, and fall like the sudden light of truth.

Boaz was unaware the maid was there at all,
And Ruth knew not her part in God's most holy will;
A wave of perfume came from the sweet asphodel,
The whispers of the night floated above Gilgal.

Nuptial the shadow was, a solemn holy thing;
And doubtless, just beyond, the angels passed like light,
For one could see, at times, strange shapes that jewelled
the night,
Something divine and blue seemed passing like a Wing.

The breath of Boaz asleep was mingled with the rills,
The rills whose music creeps across the mosses green
In the year's fairest month when all is loveliest seen
And when the lilies flower in white on all the hills.

Ruth wondered, Boaz slept, the fields in shade immersed,
The sheep-bells tinkled low in vague and gentle mirth;
A wave of bounteousness came down from heaven to
earth;

It was the dark still hour when the lions slake their
thirst.

In old Jerimadeth and Ur sleep blest all things,
Silver the stars were strewn upon the deep dark skies;
Among these flowers of shade the thin clear crescent lies,
A western glow, and Ruth was filled with wonderings,

Eyes closed beneath her veils, Ruth lay, in wonder
sealed:

What God, what Harvester of heaven's summer had
passed

Leaving in careless haste, and heedlessly had cast
That little golden sickle on heaven's starry field.

THE BALLADE OF THE CONDEMNED

(Translated from François Villon's "Ballade des Pendus"; "which was made in prison by Master François Villon for himself and his companions, while he waited to be hanged with them.")

I

Good mortal brothers who will live, we dead,
Let not your hearts against our sins be hard
For, if your kindness on our griefs be shed,
Therefore shall God so give you sweet regard.
Behold us, five or six, fettered, dark-starred;
And our poor flesh that gluttony hath marred
Will soon be grim and green from Death's reward,
While we, the bones, to dust and ashes fall.
Let no man scorn our woe in disregard,
But pray sweet Christ that He may pardon all!

II

If we have called you brothers, leave unsaid
Your thoughts of scorn: though justice did award
Our bones to Death. You know good sense is spread
Not evenly in all, clown, thief, or bard;
Pray then for us, with tranquil hearts unscarred,
Pray to the Virgin's Son that He may guard
And pour His mercy as a precious nard
To keep our souls from hell's infernal thrall.
Since we are dead, speak no despising word,
But pray sweet Christ that He may pardon all!

III

The rains have washed and bleached our bodies dread,
The sun has dried and blackened them, and charred;
Magpies and crows have picked from every head
The staring eyes, the lashes and the beard.
Ah, never, never shall we sleep in sward,
But here and there, when Time doth change his ward,
By restless seasons our poor bones are jarred,
And pecked in holes by birds, like thimbles small.
Join not our bands that wield the lawless shard,
But pray sweet Christ that He may pardon all!

L'ENVOI

Prince Jesus, who hath all in Thy regard,
Grant that our souls by hell may be unmarred,
Grant that we nowise enter that foul hall!
Good men, speak not of us with mocking word,
But pray sweet Christ that He may pardon all!

NEW YORK

(FROM THE FRENCH OF ROBERT CHOQUETTE)

The City dwelt in me, even as I dwelt in her,
Great towers of shining stone, great ecstasy of towers:
Whirlwind of walls that make the eyeball start and stir,
Walls teeming with bright eyes, like porous honey-comb,
Where Man, the bee, toils all his eager daylight hours;
For in those walls' mad rise toward Heaven's ghostly
foam

I sensed the daily task and all its feverish flow,
The million winding steps, the fingers never still,
The lights, the myriad pipes wherein the waters go
In curving arabesques, while through mysterious wires
The swift brief word that flies from nether earth to
spires.

I walked, and nothing knew
Save life as live as fire;
The Elevated flew
Like thunder-smitten wire.

It burst the city wide; it rolled its steely rings
Round dismal ruined homes.—From loud Grand
Central's Gates
Leapt black steel demons swathed in heavy smoky wings
To vanish far away, down dim-horized rails,
While far below the streets, those rhythmic shuttling
Fates,
Through many coloured lights, the Subway flashed and
roared
Like spiders spinning out in tireless filmy trails

The web of movement swift.

Far, far above me soared

A huge geometry of ever-ceaseless motion

Furrowed by smoking streets—yet I saw everywhere

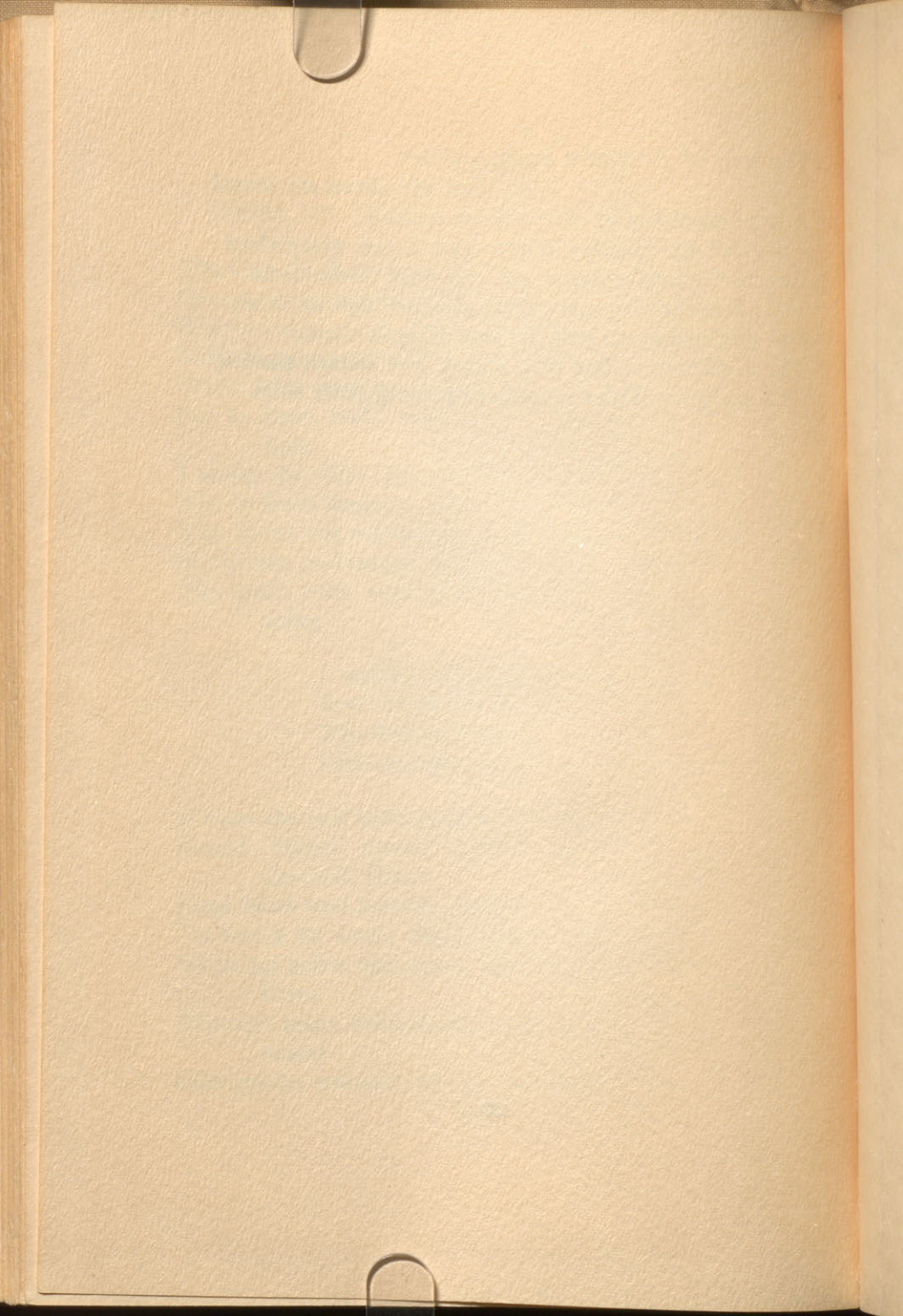
Despite the angles sharp, the ever-wild commotion,

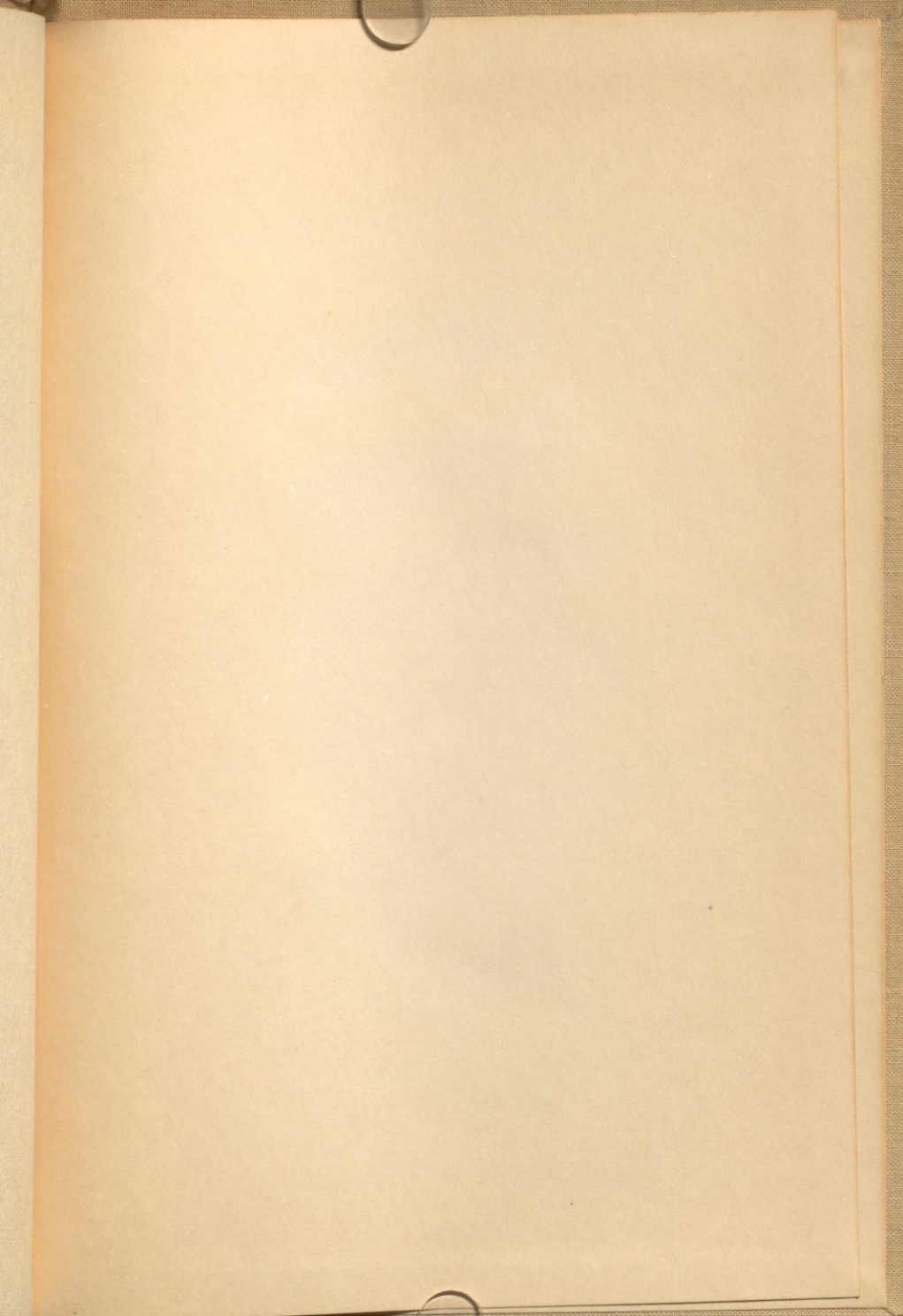
The all-restraining mass, there gleamed high up in air

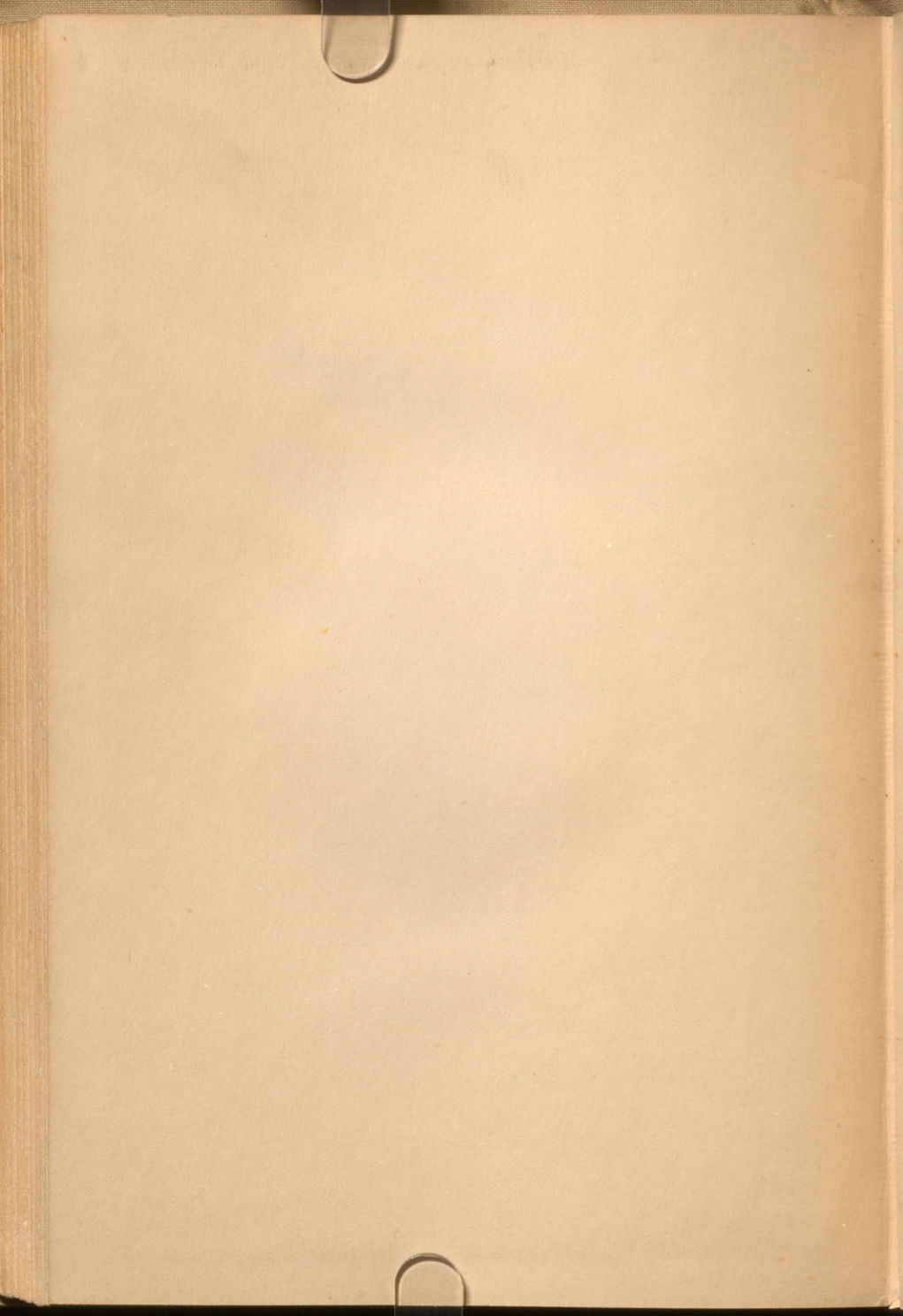
Swaying and rising vast, far mounting in the sky

The architectural line that soared, and seemed the leap

Of some great Titan roused, awakening from sleep.







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