

The RYERSON
POETRY
CHAP-BOOKS



Excuse
for Futility

By CHARLES FREDERICK BOYLE

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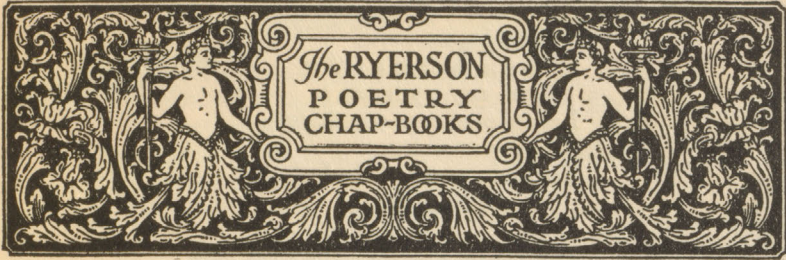
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Charles Frederick Boyle

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Mr. Charles Frederick Boyle resides in Fredericton, New Brunswick. His poems have appeared in the press of his own Province, and in magazines elsewhere. Mr. Boyle's first Chap-Book, *Stars Before the Wind*, was published in 1937.



Excuse for Futility

By Charles Frederick Boyle

IF I could snare the quietude of eve,
Shepherd my thoughts to night-time and the hills
And let them browse awhile where little rills
Delight the heather blooms and hearts that grieve;
If I might wander where low winds bereave
The forest of its fragrances, my ills
I might shake off, and, while the glory fills
My little soul, await the dawn's alleve.

Instead (so does Desire prostitute
Itself to Circumstance) I must maintain
My sober mien, my good and grave repute.
I am the object of my old disdain
And all of my despair is but the fruit
Of one vast thought I knew not how to train.

WE WATCH THE MOON ON WATER

LET us be here together
For a still moment.
This is a windless weather,
Of grief component.
Here is a spread resplendent
Of silent sea,
Swept by the soft attendant
Moon-mystery.

Let us but watch together,
Speaking no word;
Silence is more of a tether
Than any cry heard.
Let us loose even our passion,
Every small fear,
Creeds in or out of the fashion,
Hard-held or dear.

There is no wind, but the night now
Grows a bit chill—
Let us creep back to the sight now
Of street, house and mill. . . .
We must return to the thieving,
The sin and the sorrow
After a little believing
In a better tomorrow.

FULFILMENT

I TILLED the soil and held the plough
And clucked to the horse, "Come, get up now"—
For ere we reap we plough and sow.

From the ribbon-road up to the hill
Where dark, dense woods the sun did kill
The furrow ran—but by my will.

The moist earth stained my hands and face,
But my heart sang to another pace
Than that of the horse in the clinking trace.

Though I loved the earth and the earth loved me
I dreamed great dreams of what would be
When the soft wind sang through the harvest-tree.

But when Autumn came I left the yield
To wave in the wind and rot in the field,
While I toiled o'er hills where music pealed
And planted a larger, fairer field.

THE POET SLEEPS WITHOUT PRAYING

WHAT a strange thing that he should lay him down
Without a word of thanks to that great Bard
Who fashioned his desires like a sword
And gave him pain to keep him without wound!
How doubly strange he has in darkness swooned
Without one prayer for mercy, that the Word
May yet again be given, bright and hard,
To keep him, and his fellows, safe and sound!

What vast ingratitude, unworthiness,
To count but meet the gifts of night and day!
Make not excuses of his tiredness,
But weep, and with his guardian angel say:
"How sad that he, who has most cause to bless,
Should thus lie down, forgetting him to pray!"

ENNUI

IT is a lovely night. The Dartmouth shore
Shows thirteen lights, high up—a dozen more,
I think, than once some shepherds looked upon.
That is a foolish thought. I need no star
To lead me to new dawn.

There are too many stars, too many callings
All crosspatched and at counter with the deep
Of night and ocean and its risings, fallings,
Its sadness and its soothings and its sleep.

For even beauty wearies sometimes; peace
Grows but a tantalizing; I remember
Things that but death makes cease.

All beauty must be cruel, truth be heard
Through tears, and passion burned to its last ember.

Ah, "loneliness" is such a lovely word!

LAST STORM

AS some great king who goes forth to his death
A Bedecks himself with laurel and brocade
And flaunts his jewelled sceptre—so the breath
Of Winter has today been unafraid.
Or like a lover who far lands must probe,
Needs pledge his faith with one but quickly-kissed,
It leaves with its belov'd its ermine robe—
And all the trees are imageries of mist.
Oh, here is beauty, wondrous and most kind!
Oh, here is splendour for the soul in pain;
And once it would have thrall'd my heart and mind,
But now no peace it brings, nor any gain.

Is beauty so incarnate with past fear
That in the midst of living I must stand
A thing insensate and immune to cheer?—
O God, who gave me mind to understand,
Help me to see the wisdom of Thy way
In human-dealing as with nature-kind,
And lead me from the fenland of decay,
But leave my flesh and all its hurts behind!
Have not my crimes been expiated well
And all my longings put to rout at last
When I stand, shamed, and have no words to tell
This beauty that should bind me to Thee fast?

THE LEADER

AND if in after years the tale of death
A Be heard on high, and love be lonesome long,
Seek out my thought-nirvanas, and bequeath
To those in pain my puling tide of song.
For life looked up at me with questing eyes:
All men looked up—had I a tale to tell
To woo them from their myriad miseries
And lead them to a land I visioned well?
I failed them. I had only words to speak
Of things that might have been or yet may be,
And of them all I was most foolish, weak,
And more than any knew despondency.
Tell those in pain but this: I failed, and died—
Say, also, I'm not sorry that I tried.

MAN IN THE MOON

IF—as I oft have thought—our spirits are
At death conveyed to some far spheral mould;
If through the heavens then there may be rolled
Some part of us, to seek the sun or star
Or Dian, or the dawn—then let me mar
Not any beam of morn or noon-ray bold.
Nay, let me wander through the night-sky cold,
A dweller on the moon that sails afar.

Let me, through broken casements, see men dream,
As I have dreamed, of Fame's sweet laurel-wreath.
Ah! I will live again, and then will seem
As passionate of old my mother heath,
As husht with beauty as a frozen stream,
But with what strange, wild tumult underneath!

TO A CERTAIN MAN OF THE CITY

“A HUMPED-BACK little bastard,” I was called
(The strange thing was, 'twas on a Christmas day).
My back *is* humped, I'm not ashamed to say,
One leg is lame, but I am not appalled.
These things throughout the streets have children bawled
Since I was able first to walk the way—
But you nor I nor anyone can lay
On my dead mother blame that I am galled.

Whate'er disfigurement I have to wear
I carry proudly, as a gift from God—
And my belief in Him by saint was taught:
She was a brave, good lady, gracious, fair—
You should be thankful, sir, that once she trod
The earth, for she'll forgive what I do not.

PEACE

I'M not a moralist, or one to say
With smile or sigh, "Is that not life, my dear?"
Each time a joy is followed by a tear,
Each time a leaf may fall or hope may stray.
I would not circumscribe and make obey
By rote, the unpredictables of fear—
But sometimes even to my eyes appear
Brief summaries of life in this our day.

A boy and girl came into a long room,
Beneath bright lights that gave the silver sheen.
Their words were overheard. The lad then walked
To where a coin-worked music-box did loom—
Soon raucous syncopation swirled between
The two, and 'round the room. They sat and talked.

MOTIVE FOR SANCTITY

I T will not mean as much in after years
What sort of life I lead, as what I say.
If I commit adultery today,
Or lie, or curse, or steal, succumb to fears,
Who will there be to know of it with tears?
I leave no sons who will my rules obey
Nor any heart to care, but my words may
Be known by other madmen, other years.

But I forget: who sings in truth must sing
Of life as he has known it, and my hands
Must not be blood-incrusted when they swing
Thought-censers to half-understand commands;
For only words their Author loves will ring
Where morning reddens undiscovered lands.

THE NIGHT SKY

MY mind was squeezed by torment, so I rose
And went into the fields; all night I lay
And watched the heavens passing in array,
Their beauties inexorable as woes.
I saw the searchlight of the North that flows
Up like a tide of pain; the snipers gay
Called stars; the tanks of clouds that scout the day
And heard the wind that aeroplaning goes.

I found the peace I sought. The awesome lands
Blazed benedictions through the soul of me:
As much of wisdom as a fool commands
Was wrought from grief by some strange alchemy,
A hint of grace no man quite understands
Till stars come close in last reality.

GRAND MANAN ISLAND

THE surge and swish of tides upon this beach,
The sea-gulls' cry far out above the weirs—
Now surely have we found an end to fears
And know no need of ineffectual speech.
Here, isolated from all mortal reach,
We seem to be a part of all the years,
While life and love and death each one appears
A little thing, and we more frail than each.

Here on this isle of Grand Manan we take
From woodland and from crag, from sea and sun
A true perspective, for our lost souls' sake—
How futile are the things for which we run
When there is no more beauty to awake
And no more wisdom than: "God's will be done!"

LOVER INTO ACTOR

IF I should meet you now, would the old wonder
Come up in the old way? Would trumpets blare
And banners, joyous, whip the breeze? Would thunder
Swell nearer, nearer, through tumultuous air?
Or would I pause, dissemble my emotion,
And greet you with a word serene and small,
As though forgetting we had pledged love's potion,
As though you nothing were to me at all?

This is the role my pride would have me play
To show what I have gained from your forgetting.
Then you could scoff not at my blundering way,
Perhaps at my lost passion find regretting. . . .
What fool am I to plan! My eyes would gloat,
My hands would seek your hair, my lips your throat.

SONNET IN WAR'S BEGINNING

IDO not think it is the great defeat,
The shattering blow, that strikes us to a pail,
For I have seen men's courage in retreat
And know that new strengths rise when old faiths fall.
To have a worthy cause takes most of pain
From dying—this we learned at bitter cost;
And now that we are called to arms again,
There are some things we leave are better lost.

We loose monotony and we unwind
The tentacles of undirected fear,
And all our hopelessness we leave behind
Most gladly, knowing right and truth are clear
And will prevail to pattern us and bind
Tomorrow's world to what we hold most dear.

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Lorne Pierce—Editor

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