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by

Michael T. Casey.

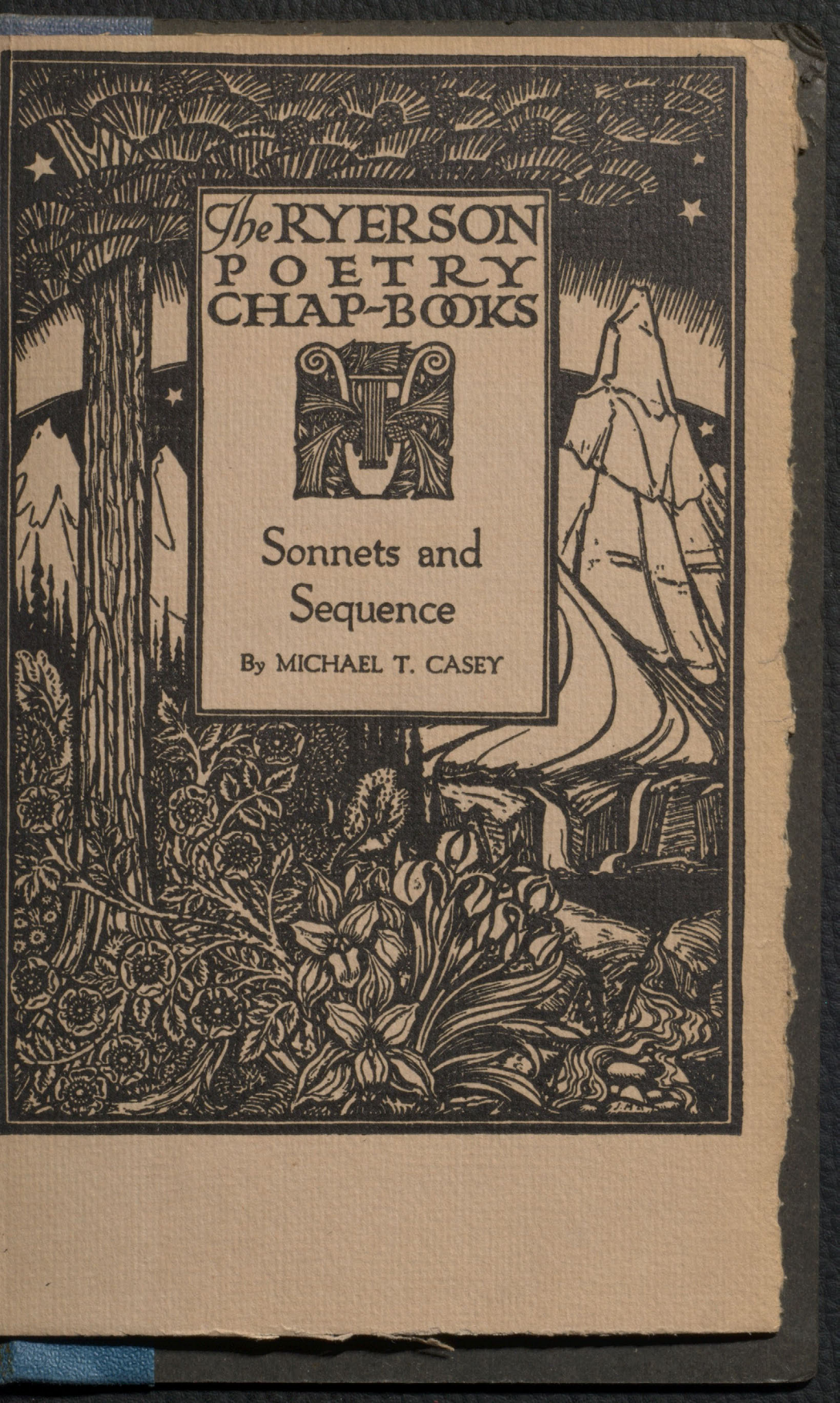
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Michael Thomas Casey was born on June 2, 1900, in Drogheda, Ireland, one of seven sons of an outstanding figure in Irish newspaper circles, Michael A. Casey, Editor of the *Drogheda Independent*. Studied law at the Incorporated Law Society of Ireland and the National University in Dublin before coming to Canada. Worked as a reporter on the *Montreal Gazette* and wrote a daily column on the *Montreal Herald*. Joined the staff of the Montreal Harbour Commission sixteen years ago, and is now the Assistant Port Secretary. Has been a writer of essays, articles and newspaper columns since teen age. Began to write poetry about six years ago, and each year since has won prizes and honourable mention in the poetry contests conducted by the Canadian Authors' Association. Married Margaret, daughter of the late David Sheehy, M.P. Has one son.

While the page proofs of this chap-book were awaiting the author's final O.K. he passed on, without warning. John Mellor assisted Mrs. Casey with the final corrections.



Sonnets and Sequence

By Michael T. Casey

PLOUGHMAN

O WISE, unswerving trinity of toil,
 Plodding these uplands, now so bleakly bare,
 Etching, like time, your lines of wrinkled care
 On the grey face of earth, when you despoil
 This ruggedness which is so proud a foil
 For the rich beauty that the hills will wear,
 Calm husbandman, do you not breathe a prayer
 That human hearts might yield so rich a soil?

Stay, ploughman, while I speak my thought aloud,
 Here where the plover wheel above the gate,
 On that grim afternoon when I have ploughed
 The last dim upland corner of my fate,
 And at the angelus my head is bowed,
 May all my furrows stretch as clean and straight.

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THE WILD GEESE

AT last the time of the wild geese is here:
The surging music of that windswept cry
Matches their flight, so vigorous and high:
They have no time for wondering or fear,
Their course is steadfast set, the way is clear,
Intensity impels them as they fly,
A wedge of resolution in the sky,
The sure resistless thrusting of a spear.

No vacillating hesitancy mars
The onward sweep of their impulsive flight,
Space has no terrors, time can leave no scars
Upon their bosoms so serene and white,
Like winged words flung against the listening stars
They write a poem on the page of night.

DAFFODILS IN JANUARY

LIKE gleam of laughter in a sullen face,
They flash their vivid yellow on the street,
Flaunting their joy so gaily, with such sweet
And care-free youthfulness that for a space
We who went past that window felt no trace
Of winter's grimness or the drifting sleet,
But seemed to hear afar the pattering feet
Of Beauty running through the market-place.

Tell me your secret, whither are you hieing,
Sent to the slaughter, need you dance and sing;
What thin faint bugle-call gentles your dying,
Your heads are bending to its echoes' ring;
Whence do ye come, with banners bravely flying,
Most slender vanguard of the marching Spring?

THE SEA SPEAKS

to Synge's old woman in "Riders to the Sea"

WOMAN, be still, and do not mock my roar
With your shrill anguish, let your tears be dried
For they but waste themselves upon my tide;
The bones you loved lie strewn upon my floor,
But they are resting on a windless shore;
Cease then bewailing that your men have died,
They are my bridegrooms come to claim their bride,
Mother nor wife they'll need not evermore.

What is so strange, old mother, in their fate?
They loved me living, but I love them dead;
You had them once, your fine sons and your mate,
And from my deeps they brought your daily bread;
I am serene, I shrink not from your hate,
So wrap your shawl about your shivering head.

JEANNE D'ARC

HASTEN this murder in the market place,
Pile the dry sticks of hate about the maid,
By her intrepid purpose sore betrayed,
Trapped in the web of danger and disgrace;
An inward fire is lighting all her face,
Stainless, unsheathed, like a shining blade,
Her youthful heart goes forward, unafraid,
To meet the ardour of death's fierce embrace.

Fire to her young fire, flame to virgin flame,
Lilies are springing where her footsteps trod,
High over Domremy the banners dance;
In burning coals of honour write her name,
The glowing embers of a saint of God
Brighten the skies of freedom over France.

AN OLD SOLDIER SPEAKS

MY soul was once a fine Damascus blade,
Placed by the Captain in my outstretched hand,
Right joyously I whirled the slender brand,
And went to battle in my pride arrayed;
But now mine enemies grow unafraid,
The fight seems more intensive where I stand,
And in my pouch there is no silver sand
To scour away red rust the years have made.

Let me not falter and grow discontent,
Now that my wrist is feeble for the sword,
My foes may not yet treat me with disdain;
For I, thank God, although my force be spent,
Still have good steel wherewith to stay the horde,
And stratagems gained in the long campaign.

LEAVES

LIKE leaves upon the sodden autumn ground,
The years are falling thickly 'round my feet,
Fluttering softly down the silent street
Of my ambition, there is scarce a sound
As ever grimly grows the tragic mound;
My valiant tree will soon be left to greet
The new grey day in nakedness complete,
While all my ghosts of dreams lie strewn around.

Why are you falling from my splendid tree,
Oh leaves that yesterday were young and green,
Why do you blush for shame before you die?
Stay with me yet awhile, and you will see
How calm will be the evening, how serene,
Ah do not mock me with your gentle sigh.

SEA GULLS

STRANGE and unfriendly watchmen of the sea,
Breasting the salty wind on languid plume,
Dipping in bored defiance of the spume
The angry breakers scatter, are you free
To wander at your impulse carelessly,
Cresting the rollers, gliding through the gloom
Where fancy leads you, or does secret doom
Force you to follow ships eternally?

Perched upon barren crags, no meadows gay
Lure you to loiter: where the spouting whale
Rolls in the northern sea, and dolphins play,
You drift, like feathered ghosts that ride the gale,
Sad souls of all the seamen who have died,
Haunting the lonely wasteways of the tide.

THE TREES OF CALVARY

THERE is no need to bow your heads in shame,
To tremble wildly on this tragic hill,
Where all the forest voices are so still,
As if they feared to speak aloud His name;
His was the wish, it was for this He came,
To suffer, to obey His Father's will,
If these poor fools were mad with lust to kill,
It is not trees, but men, must bear the blame.

Lift up your hearts, ye sentinels of oak,
Raise now your stately head, each listening tree,
Ye pines and cedars, thrust away your fears;
All men will heed the gentle words He spoke,
The wood whereon He died will henceforth be
A symbol of repentance and of tears.



NOVA SCOTIA MAID

BLUEBERRIES ripen and the world's at peace,
 Down in the cove a million ripples lap
 Upon the shingle, lines of washing flap
 Behind the houses; there is no release
 From anger or monotony's increase;
 Here on the high slope the woodpecker's tap
 Sounds in the silence like a thunderclap;
 Soon will be heard the honking of the geese.

Eighteen long empty years have spread their sails
 And slipped to the horizon: no one comes
 To talk of coral islands, or with tales
 Of far adventure like the beat of drums;
 The gypsy woman seemed to have much skill,
 But I grow weary waiting on this hill.

MATER DOLOROSA

(An old woman prays before a shrine of the Virgin)

MOTHER of Sorrows, kneeling at thy shrine
 With bended head, I ask thy sympathy,
 The son I bore is gone beyond the sea,
 Great is my grief, as great was surely thine,
 The lad I loved, the lad that once was mine,
 My son, my treasure, has forgotten me,
 Ask thine own Child to listen to my plea,
 And turn the water of my heart to wine.

My days are dreary, and the nights are long,
 And soon my sands of sorrow will have run,
 Mary, take pity on my boundless grief;
 Let him but cross my threshold with a song,
 And I shall sing the praises of thy Son,
 As did the mother of the repentant thief.

HUSBANDMAN I

HUSBANDMAN I, with the proud earth for wife;
Deep is her bosom, and serene her face,
And calm and tranquil all her ways: no trace
Of wanton inefficiency or strife
Ruffles my deep contentment, I am rife
With peace of heart and mind; her flowing grace
Yields to my faithfulness and rude embrace;
I sow the fertile seed: she gives back life.

I have no subtleties, yet she is mine,
To worship when the yellow moonlight gleams;
She whispers in the rustle of the pine,
Her laughter is the rippling of the streams;
When the wheat ripens, and the laden vine
Is luscious on the hill, I dream my dreams.



CANADIAN CALENDAR

JANUARY

WHITE shining month of courage, and the glare
Of gleaming sun-gold on a frozen hill,
Now summer shudders in her secret lair,
And all the crusted lakes are hushed and still;
The crackling sound of quietude at bay
Pulses like music on the frigid breeze,
At morning comes the cold impassive day,
Stalking sure-footed through the naked trees;
Poised o'er the forest hangs the curling smoke
Of man-fires, where the silence spreads her cloak.

FEBRUARY

Grim month of blizzard, and the toneless cry
Of lost winds wailing to a bloodless moon,
Their restlessness disturbs the winter sky
With the vague promise of a distant June;
Far in the north the forest trails are white,
And there is heard, like music on the breeze,
The song of axes, where the woodsmen smite
For victory amid the legioned trees;
Cold is the landscape, but the sunlight gleams
With a gay zest upon the jewelled streams.

MARCH

Month of the vanquishing of bitter cold,
When the sun's ardour melts the yielding snow,
And the new moon smiles with a wisdom old
As at some secret jest that earth should know;
Now winter makes his last despairing stand
In sullen bleak acceptance of a fate
Too awesome for resistance, and the land
As for a miracle appears to wait,
While in the waking towns rich music peals
Of footsteps, and the crashing roll of wheels.

APRIL

Month of the border-line 'twixt green and grey,
When the lean maples stretch their weary arms
As for surcease from idleness they pray,
And good brown earth lies bare upon the farms;
Now in the valley where the sheltered air
Is lazily rejoicing in the sun,
A timid snowdrop blooms serenely fair,
The symbol of a victory bravely won;
And bluebirds in exultant voices sing,
As evening shyly lengthens into spring.

MAY

Young eager month whose lilac-scented days
Are vivid with enchantment as a dream,
By every garden path the tulips blaze,
And daffodils are dancing by the stream;
Now amid witchery of wistful green,
Fresh from the storehouse of a gracious earth,
The smiling pink-tipped apple buds are seen,
Fragrant with glorious tidings of re-birth;
High on the hill a ploughman scars the sky
With his plain beauty—north the wild-geese fly.

JUNE

Month of the roses, and the crimson blush
With which the timid east betrays the dawn,
Ere the young sun's impassioned kisses brush
The dew-drop tears from every grassy lawn;
Now are the meadows fair with waving grass,
Where the wild iris beckons to the bees,
The peonies cluster where the shadows pass
Beneath the lacy fringes of the trees;
The night-hawks cry their placid loneliness
In wonder at the summer's comeliness.

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JULY

Month of exotic splendour, when the sun
Godlike bestows his blessing on the land,
Bidding the lakes be still, the rivers run,
The crops to ripen 'neath his generous hand;
Down where the jasmine hangs like golden fleece,
The air with subtle perfumes is enriched,
The hollyhocks, like sentinels of peace,
Drowse in their ranks, by beauty's spell bewitched;
Summer is brooding on the sultry noon,
The whip-poor-will cajoles a passive moon.

AUGUST

Glad month of holiday and ripening grain,
And the soft lullaby of laughing streams,
In gentle pattering of summer rain
The meadow-larks make music for our dreams;
The young deer nibble at the sumach trees,
Great rivers wind their placid way to sea,
Afar upon the evening's tranquil breeze
There rings the glad song of the chickadee;
Night plucks her velvet garment from the west,
And pins the crescent moon upon her breast.

SEPTEMBER

Month of the golden harvest, when at noon
The hush of great achievement stills the air,
And there is wafted to a yellow moon
The perfume of fulfilment, like a prayer;
Now flash the silver sickles in the wheat,
In final fury of rejoicing toil,
The sound of laughter where the gleaners meet
Re-echoes round the rich fruits of the soil;
Red berries ripen in the brambled glen,
And there is comfort in the hearts of men.

OCTOBER

Kind month of apple ripeness, and the rush
Of wild-duck in battalions to the south,
The haw-trees in complacent grandeur blush,
And wild-nut clusters tempt a greedy mouth;
Now Indian summer like the friendly ghost
Of gay and stately things returns again
To sun himself, and bid us make the most
Of beauty ere the coming of the rain;
And the red mountains flame like scarlet words
Writ to the lost symphony of the birds.

NOVEMBER

Grey lonely month of mist and drifting rain,
When the birds beat their wings in sad farewell,
And cold winds of the north come forth again,
Their voices creaking like a rusty bell;
Now sleeps the brown bear in his snug retreat,
Now laps the angry water of the lake,
Now walks the wily fox on wary feet,
Now cries the loon as if his heart would break;
And the sun sinks contemptuous in the west,
Ere night descends upon a land distressed.

DECEMBER

Month of the silence and the gentle snow,
The sad cold earth gathers you to her breast
That she may whisper, plaintively and low,
Of the proud glories that she once possessed;
Deep in the woods the trees, no longer shy,
Take solace in the raiment that the clouds
Provide for their adorning from the sky,
And fall asleep wrapped in their fleecy shrouds;
Now comes the Christ-child to disarm our fear,
And set his seal of sweetness on the year.

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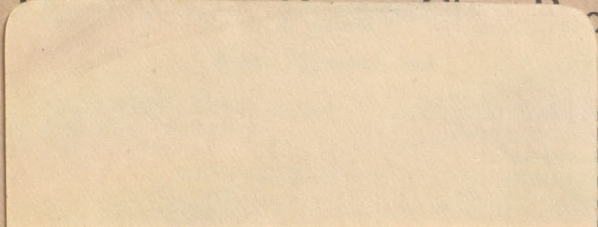
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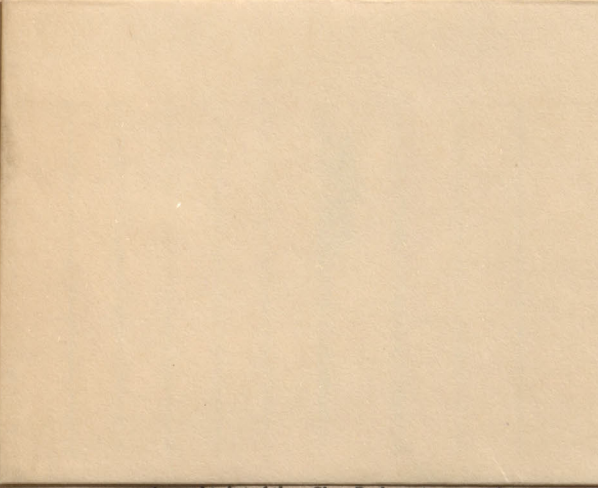
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