

The Western Home Monthly

Vol. XVIII. Published Monthly By the Home Publishing Co., Ltd., Winnipeg, Canada. No. 6

The Subscription Price of The Western Home Monthly is \$1.00 a year or three years for \$2.00 to any address in Canada, or British Isles. The subscription to foreign countries is \$1.50 a year, and within the City of Winnipeg limits and in the United States \$1.25 a year.

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War Poetry

The war has called forth the feelings of the race. It has compelled poetry from many who would otherwise have been dumb. Not all of this poetry is good, but much of it is inspiring and instructive. The best collection of shorter poems yet published has been edited by J. W. Cunliffe and published by the MacMillans. It is almost sacrilege to cut from these poems, but a few quotations will show their nature and the wide variety of topics treated. It is cheering to see that Canada and her poets take an honored place. And of course this is not all. Oxenham, Mrs. Livesay, Marjorie Pitchall, Herbert Asquith, Chesterton, Alfred Graves, Stephen Phillips and two-score others have given us their hearts in song, and we give our Chat page up to their message in this issue.

Here is the spirit of Britain! Here is how the struggle will be interpreted in the years to come. The author is Albert D. Watson, Toronto:

"And the future shall say of her sons who died,
Wherever their feet have trod,
With millions of comrades in arms allied,
They cast the treasures of Earth aside
And marched to the goals of God."

And who has presented the yearning and the determination of the soldiers in the trenches more quietly and more forcibly than Norah M. Holland.

April in England. Daffodils are growing
By every wayside, golden, tall and fair;
April—and all the little winds are blowing,
The scents of springtime through the sunny air.
April in England, God, that we were there.

April in England! Blood and dust and smother
Screaming of horses, men in agony.
April—Full many of thy sons, O Mother
Never again those dewy dawns shall see.
April in England. God keep England free!

No more loyal and knightly son of Empire than Rupert Brooke. He spoke from a full heart when he wrote:

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field

That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware
Gave once her flowers to love, her ways to foam,
A body of England's; breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers blest by suns of home.

Here is comfort! A word spoken in remembrance, none the less worthy because the writer is unknown:

Ye must not mourn for him, he that went out to France,
He like the rest of them—clear-minded, open-eyed,
It was for him to decide.
He took his chance
And he is dead in France.
Oh; do not mourn for him, he heard his country's call,

And answering, gave all he had to give.
Yet though they die they live
Not dead at all
Those who obeyed the call.

Here is a contrast that brings before us all the awfulness of war in a moment. Could anything be more striking?
Soft benediction of September sun,
Voices of children, laughing as they run;
Green English lawns, bright flowers and butterflies,
And over all the blue embracing skies.
Tumult and roaring of the incessant gun,
Dead men and dying, trenches lost and won;
Blood, mud and havoc, bugles, shoutings, cries;
And over all the blue embracing skies.

Some of these songs speak of the change at home. It is not cheerful poetry, but it touches the heart. Could anything be much more pathetic than these verses by Henry Allsopp?

What makes the dale so strange, my dear?
What makes the dale so strange?
The men have gone from the dale, my dear
And that makes all the change.

The lanes and glens are still at night,
No laughter or songs I hear,
Our lover-lads have marched to the fight
And maidens are lonely, my dear.

Beautiful beyond telling are the words of Alan Seeger who fell in battle July, 1916:

I have a rendezvous with Death,
At some disputed barricade
When Spring comes round with rustling shade
And apple blossoms fill the air.
I have a rendezvous with Death,
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

Richard Butler Glaenger put the horror of it all in another form in these words:

Oh, it's fun to be a soldier! Oh, it's fun,
fun fun,
To catch the silly enemy and get 'em on the run,
To here and there blow off a head,
With just a bit of chuckling lead,
To bayonet a foolish bloke
At hide-and-seek in trench and smoke,
To shoot, shoot, shoot
Till they've got no legs to scoot!
Fun? Sure it's fun, just the finest ever, son.

Have you heard the paean of victory—victory in defeat and victory in success? Listen to Lincoln Concord:
Men face to face with nature, death and pain!
The Elemental shown! And dim and far the truth appearing!
The hovering dream! The distant and divine conception.
I sing no battles lost, retreating armies:
O, I tell you in this campaign there are no defeats!
O, I tell you, the retreating and advancing armies are equally triumphant—;
O, I tell you, the lost battles contribute as much as the battles won to the sure result of this campaign
Victory! Victory! Victory!



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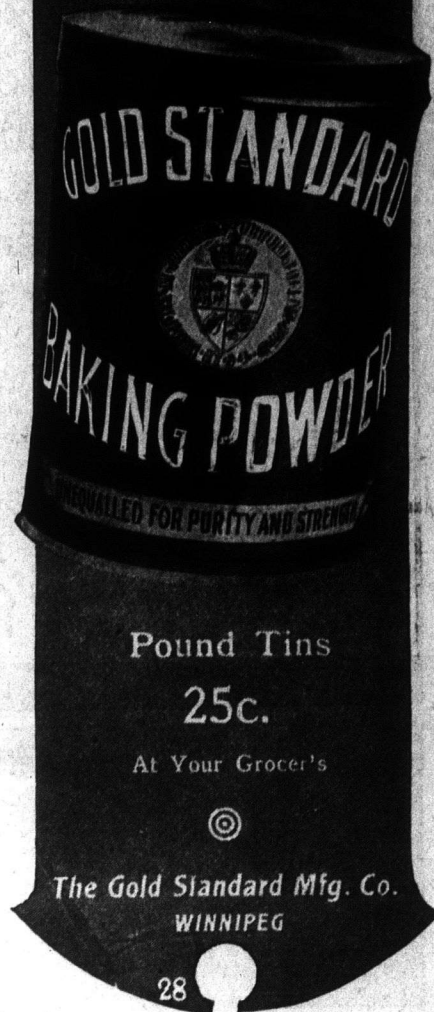
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- 2 3/4 cup rolled oats
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