

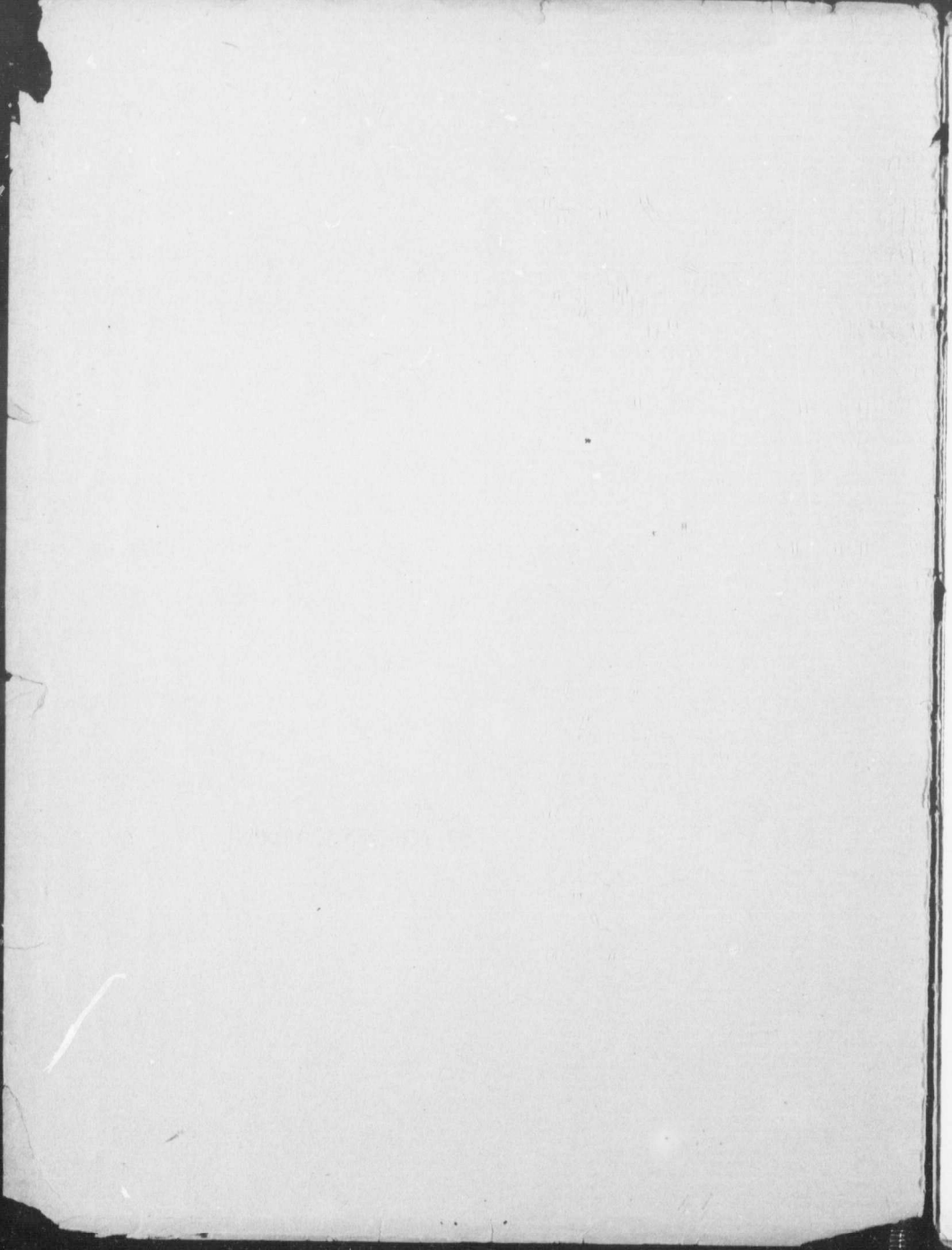
Victoria :
An Ode.

Campbell, Wilfred
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EPHEMERA FILE

By
W. Wilfred Campbell.

Ottawa, Canada.

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[1901]
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VICTORIA.

ROLL out earth's muffled drums, let sable streamers flow
And all Britannia's might assume her panoply of woe!
Love's holiest star is gone;
Wind wide the funeral wreath,
For She, our mightiest, hath put on
The majesty of death.

Roll forth the notes of woe,
Let the baleful trumpets blow
A titan nation's titan heartfelt throes;
Mid age and storm and night and blinding snow,
Death, the pale tyrant, lays our loftiest low.

Like some fair mask of queenly sleep she lies,
The mists of centuries in her sightless eyes,
This august woman; greatest of earth's great;
Who ruled this splendour, held this Empire's fate,
And built this purity and white of love's supreme estate.

Low, like a lily broken on its stem,
Passed all her glory, filched her diadem,
She sleeps at His weird bidding who saith, Peace!
And all the loud world's mighty roar is hushed in love's
surcease.

Song is an echo; lore an idle tale;
Love but the yearning of white lips that wail;
Woe but the weeping of wild autumn rain;
Power but the transient gust of angered main;
Thus fades all glory. But her lofty life,
That long gold summer as mother, monarch, wife;
These bide and stay, 'mid wrecks that pass away,
Beyond the mutability of our poor day,
To live when power is swept,
And pomp but clay in clay.

Greater than greatness, stronger than iron power,
That makes earth's Neros grim, her Caesar's dower;
Hers was the gift to girdle isles of peace
With woman's nobleness and love's increase.

The century rang with might of sword and flame
And coarser moods. Amid its blight she came,
And love grew purer, life a holier name;
Religion graver, deeper; happiness,
A part of character to aid and bless;
And softer grew life's heart of bitterness.
Man's faith grew godlier, chivalry arose,
With virtue white as winter's winnowed snows;
And art and song awoke from sorrow's long repose.

From heart of suffering life and conscience went
On higher dreams of love and action bent;
Self-sacrifice from her pure convents came,
And sweetened life of half its bitter blame;
Till cynic scorn crept out in love's
White banishment of shame.

So calm she sleeps in her great southern isle,
Wrapt round in silence drear of stormy death,
No more for her wide earth or heaven will smile,
Or southern ocean breathe his balmy breath;
No more for her the love of child and friend,
Memory of old happiness gone before,
The calm, serene, of life's long peaceful end;
Sweet day, glad night, for her, no more! no more!

The rose of England, red, will burst in bloom;
The lark in meadows rise as she hath risen;
The heart of springtime break its wintry gloom,
And life its iron prison;
And far in Scotland, loved of her and him,
Her nearest, dearest, laverochs will sing;
And loch and mountain clothe their glories, dim,
With joy of leaf and wing—
But she no more will mourn her warriors dead.
Roll forth the muffled drum! The mighty will,
That worked for others; brain and heart are still;
The august, spirit, queenly soul is fled!
Death, king of monarchs as of meaner men,
Thundered her palace, o'er the drawbridge crept,
Filched life's rare coffer, stole earth's pearl, and then,
She gravely smiled and slept.

For us remains the grief, the pain, the woe,
The anguish, sorrow and the boding heart;
For her, the mighty peace of those who go
Forth from a nobler part.

From all earth's shores one mighty grief is heard ;
Each zone remote, in tryst of sorrow wed ;
The Briton's love, the alien spirit stirred—
Earth's great heart bleeding for earth's mighty dead.

Far hid from us, in veils of love, supreme,
She knows now, gloried, what she prayed before,
Storming love's fortress, for that one star-beam,
God-given to mortals wandering on this shore,
Where earth-mists thicken into perilous night,
She greets her august line of long and kingly might :

Wise, lofty Alfred : first of her great line
To build those laws by which she ruled so well ;
Heroic Richard ; and , like some Undine,
The fated Mary, both of heaven and hell ;
Great Edward ; Henry ; Charles of fateful death ;
And greatest of all her high and storied line,
Rare, great Elizabeth !
These greet her, ghostly, on that shadowed beach,
Beyond our human tears and woe of human speech.

Above all praise of ours, undying fame,
Like sun on mountain, aureoles her white brow.
We cry in darkness, creep to whence we came,
Our little sorrows and our fleeting show,
With all that crumbles whereunto men go ;
But hers a splendor will endure when time
And age have wrinkled up to shrivelled scroll,
The fame of fames above all fame sublime,
The, fair white memory of a woman's soul.

Great Caesars, Alexanders, spoil a world,
Enslave whole coasts, crush mighty peoples down ;
But greater greatness where love's flags are furled,
Than wreck of earth's renown:—
Her woman's kindness lightened all earth's seas,
And drew to her by silken cord of love,
What tyrants dread, in grim old centuries,
Could not compel by might of iron glove.

Not Shakespeare's art such majesty might wear ;
Not Cromwell's spirit linked to lofty cause ;
Not Bonaparte could with her might compare ;
Her greatness lay in being what she was,
Higher than genius, might or kingly bays—
The qucenliest queen, the noblest woman-soul
Of all earth's mighty days !

Yea, she is gone who ruled but yesterday,
Her pomp, her power, her glory, but a name!
Not for its greatest will this mad world stay,
New dreams arise, new gods for love's acclaim,
New fames, new prophets. Kings as lesser clay,
Are but the dead, gone, faded dreams

Of dead, gone yesterday.

Life feeds on life, earth's glories wane and die,
Her mighty Sidons and her vaunted Tyres!
Her far-flamed beacons and her baleful fires;
Only her noble actions never die.
These bide and stay when names of seers and kings
Are but the ashes of forgotten things,
Hid 'mid the moth and rust of earth's imaginings.

But she will live when we and all our time
Are gathered to the dread and blinding past,
A mighty dream for mighty-builled rhyme,
The golden age of Britain's splendid prime,
Remembered when old glories, long, that last,
Are blown as shrivelled autumn wreck

Upon the age's blast.

Yea, she will live, and tales of her pure life,
Her toil for others, her wise woman's love,
Her heart of sorrow 'mid the jar and strife,
Her noble wifehood, faith in heaven above,
Her simple trust in love from day to day;
Yea, these will bide, while peoples pass away
With all that puts its trust

In pomp of human clay.

Soon, with majestic rite, and earth's wide sorrow,
(Great lady of the pure and lofty crown!)
Will Britain, weeping, lay her her sadly down,
To wait a brighter dawn, a happier morrow,
In that rare tomb with that rare soul to sleep,
In God's glad rest for all who wait and weep.

And days will pass, and men will come and go,
And love and hate and sorrow and dream, alas!
And all this world and its wild wraith of woe
Unto the wrack of all the ages pass;
And greatness be forgot and dreams decay,
And empires fade, and great souls pass away;
But she will linger in her people's love,
As autumn lingers gilding winter's snows,
Or sunset fading purpled peaks above,
Leaves golden trails of glory as he goes.

So will she fade not, nor her honour pass.
But burgeon on and grow to one white fame;
While lark in heaven lifts from England's grass,
And heart of England leaps to nobler flame.

