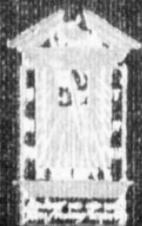


"VIMY RIDGE"

and
NEW POEMS

BY
ALFRED DOBSON.



4911
1875
1875

Arthur H. Bourne



“VIMY RIDGE”

and

NEW POEMS

BY

ALFRED GORDON.



1918

TORONTO

J. M. DENT & SONS, LIMITED.

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ALFRED GORDON

1 Lorne Ave,
Montreal.

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TO
MY MOTHER

CRANE & NEWALL, Printers, Toronto, Ontario.

"PLAY BALL!"

Specially written for the
All-Montreal Baseball Team
on
The First Anniversary
of
Vimy Ridge
April 9th

GREEN, green fields, and brown, brown
ring,

Worn by many a runner fleet!

Though as yet 'tis hardly Spring,

How ye make my heart to beat!

Leaping up to last year's nine—

And that homer—on a line!

Where's the music half so rare

As when, like a rifle-shot,

Crack!—the ball, hit fair and square,

Travels till it seems 'tis not?

None know I except the shout

When the rival's star strikes out!

Last man up, and three and two.
Bases filled, and one to tie!
I remember now (don't you?),
Centre muffed that easy fly—
Threw to home, but just too late—
Two went scampering o'er the plate!

Ah, how many a magic rhyme
For your pleasure I would make,
Full of memories of old time,
Spells which I shall never break!
Save that o'er the sunny sward
Falls the shadow of a sword!

Aye! Though none has heard me say,
Even underneath my breath,
"What! Young men at sport and play
While a world reels locked in death!"
Always past the fields of green
I another field have seen.

Hush! Those green fields melt away!

All the air is still with doom!

Darkness falls upon the day,

Shapes and shadows crowd the gloom!

One and all, take your rebuke!

Silence! 'Tis the *Iron Duke*!

"Eton's fields and Waterloo!

Still the ancient watch-fires burn!

Fletcher's, Flanders', France's—you,

Well I know, will take your turn!

Change the name, or change the game!

Still the blood you boast's the same!"

Yours perhaps it may not be

Death on battle-fields to dare;

Lo, another shade I see

By the *Iron Duke* stand there!

"Judge ye, then, if ye be fit

Sons of me, the *Younger Pitt*!

If ye did not fear to die,

*Then, on your remaining field,
To a duty not less high*

*Let both mind and will be steeled:
Loftier, as your discipline
Shall be only from within.*

Thereon shall no comradeship

*Make you greater than you are;
No divinely tattered strip*

*Lead you onward like a star!
Even traitor you may be.
None except yourself shall see!*

Seek not only to aspire,

(Few there are who never pray),

Fan the flash of sacred fire

*Till it flames from day to day:
So with brain and heart and nerve
You the State shall singly serve."*

Hush, once more! Lo, ghost on ghost

Shines one instant on the air!

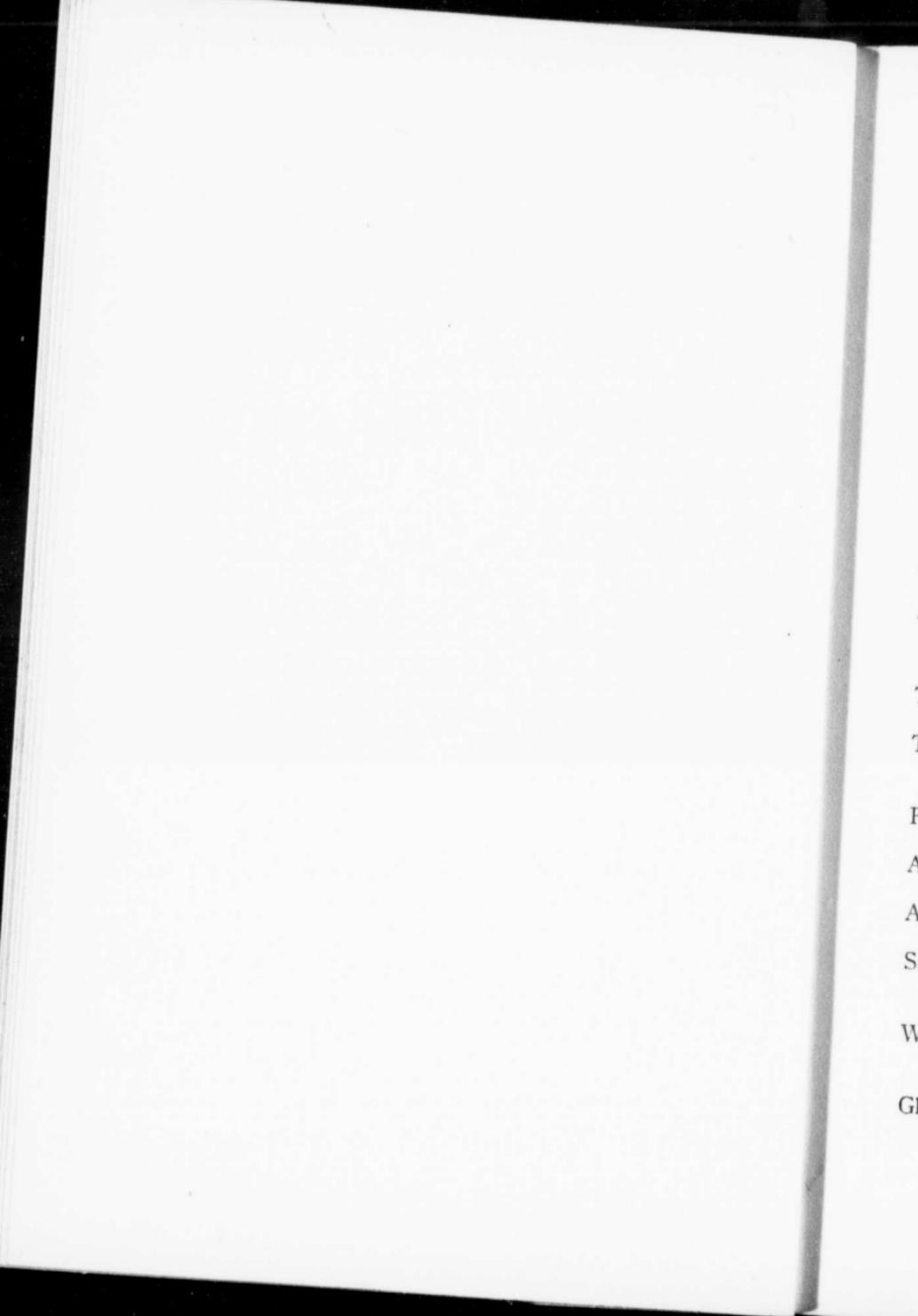
Then for ever fades the host—

Vimy Ridge! Thine too were there!

* * * * *

Gentlemen, good-luck to all!

Once more, "Batter up! Play Ball!"



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CANADA TO ENGLAND

VIMY RIDGE 1917

WHAT song of ours, O England, were
not shrill

Beside thy silence? Thou art old, art old.

The memory of centuries is thine.

Though thy throne crumbled and at length
there rolled

The fate of Greece and Rome upon thee, still

Thou should'st live on, a portion of God's will.

For thou, indeed, as time itself art slow,

As slow and imperturbable as God.

And 'tis small marvel if some fret, Is this

She from whose arm Spain reeled as from a
rod,

Who crushed Napoleon, and once more—
ah no!

Glories are these, but of times long ago.

So long, so long, thou hardly dreamest them;
Thou makest for them neither feast nor fast—
Only a note within thy calendar:
Yet what would he not give to boast the least,
(Aye, he, thy foe and ours), the smallest gem
Thou settest not in any diadem?

Thou art too scornful of a proper boast,
And men mistake thee, Lo, she lies asleep,
Sated with triumphs. They know not the
pride
Towered in silence in the soul's last keep,
Where speech were sacrilege, and ghost on
ghost
Rises in splendour and an endless host.

No statue hast thou set within thy gate,
Thou hast no Charter on a blazoned scroll,
Yet for all this is freedom thy heart's core
And liberty thine everlasting soul:
Who stemmed the onset of a despot's hate
Not in its death-throe, but its first, white
spate.

Thou didst not cover thine extremity
With unctuous horror. Thou didst draw not
back
To have war thrust upon thee in the end.
Never in Armageddon didst *thou* lack.
No *word* man's solidarity to thee
Who staked thine all therefor, what e'er
might be.

Therefore thou reignest of a natural right,
And need'st no braggarts to proclaim thy
meed;
Royal by carriage, stature, and the mien
Of one accustomed to command and lead--
Not by the baubles of a child's delight,
Nor even the great names of thy great might.

England, our mother, we, thy sons, are young;
Our exultation this day cannot be
Bounded as thine: but thou wilt pardon us.
Thou wilt forgive us if we cry, "Now see!
See now, our mother, these are they that clung
Once to thy breasts, and are they not well
sung?"

Not that we had not glories in past days,
Yet did our fathers have their home not here :
These, O our mother, loving thee not less,
Cherished in Canada one yet more dear :
They were our fathers—well won were their
 bays :
These are our sons and have our greater
 praise.

Our fathers fought for, and obtained this land,
When but an outpost, and it was but part
Of thy great history. Our sons now fight
For thine whole Empire shaken to the heart.
The names they wrote they did not write on
 sand,
But this these write before the world shall
 stand.

Aye, not since France herself first stood at
 bay,
To conquer or to die on Marne's green banks,
Driving at last across its crimsoned flood
The flower of Germany in shattered ranks,
Has there been crowded in a single day
More breathless glory for heroic lay.

England, our mother, once our boasting hear!
And in thy streets let flags and banners fly!
To drums and bugles let the people march
While Vimy Ridge is shouted to the sky!
Aye, although *there* so many that were dear
Lie yet unburied, still let cheer drown cheer.

Thereafter of our pride let nought be said,
Saving on stone, inscribed with but one line:

CANADA—VIMY RIDGE—1917

Our hearts the tablets of a secret shrine:
Though henceforth we shall lift a higher head
Because of Vimy and its glorious dead!

BALLAD OF THE FORTY SILENT MEN

THE British stood before Cambrai.

They massed their men from day to day.

On silence till *the* day should rise

Hung the issues of surprise.

* * * * *

Day after day no gun had spoken,

Night after night seemed peace unbroken:

But the roads in the faint star-light were
black

With business for the great attack.

Night after night, with muffled clanks,

On their bellies crept and crept the tanks;

Stone-still, like Saurian monsters there,

In the silhouette of a sudden flare.

Though neither song nor cigarette
Cheered the regiments as they met,
They cursed so softly, a snapping branch
Seemed like a roaring avalanche.

Back in each forest, wood and spinney,
The trooper smothered the brown mare's
whinny:

"Nuzzle your muzzle here, dear lass!
Patience! Patience! The time will pass!

Soon, lass, soon, we'll ride and ride
With ringing hoofs through the countryside!
Hard on the heels of the flying foe,
As we dreamed we'd ride three years ago!"

* * * * *

The British stood before Cambrai.
Nearer and nearer drew the day.
Almost upon the eve, the foe
Sought what he by chance might know.

There was a flurry of hot flame,
And over No-Man's Land he came:
Perforce half-met was his attack—
With forty prisoners he went back.

* * * * *

The British stood before Cambrai.
'Twas dawn upon the very day.
"I wish, I wish," said Sir Julian Byng,
"That I were sure of *just one thing.*"

Then he pressed a button. "It's time," he
said.

"It's either *one* or *ten* thousand dead."

Over the top went Britain's sons
With never a prelude from the guns.

The tanks in the van, in a screen of smoke,
Like Juggernauts through the barbed wire
broke,

The infantry streamed through the gaps in
hordes,

And the troopers followed with flashing
swords.

* * * * *

"And what was the price?" said the General.

"A thousand, Sir Julian—that's all."

And he cleared his throat, did Sir Julian Byng,

"I thought I was certain of *just one thing*."

THE ONE MACHINE

THE stars still shone in the western sky,
And the moon still shone serene,
When the hundredth time with a lover's eye
He gazed on the one machine.

As a trooper low to his favourite mare,
He spoke to her throbbing heart;
But never in air flashed sword so fair
As she at dawn would dart!

At last, though it seemed the minutes crept
As the lingering, western rays,
Burst upon burst the light upheaped
Till the east was all ablaze.

Flight upon flight in the day-break shone.

And then went heading west;

But one machine by itself went on,

And broke, at the lines, from the rest.

And up and down the squadrons flew

As they kept the lines' patrol;

But the one machine was lost to view

As it sped beyond to its goal.

* * * * *

The sun was setting in harvest red,

And every flight was home,

But they clustered about one empty shed,

The talk of the aerodrome.

"Post him missing. It's hours too late....

And...someone...take his kit."

But the C. O., starting west, said, "Wait!

Hold on, man! Wait a bit!"

And, right in the heart of the blood-red sun,
A growing speck appeared,
And a sudden silence seized each one
As it neared and neared and neared.

'Twas the close of a perfect autumn day,
And over the cobbled stone
They heard the transport miles away,
But never the engine's drone.

Right on a line, like a bee it flew,
But never a sound they heard,
And still on the crimson disc it grew
Till it showed like a jet-black bird.

And one with a glass cried out, "It's she!"
But he suddenly seemed to choke;
And the C. O. snatched it, "Let me see!"
And he saw . . . and never spoke.

"She's very low. What's wrong with her?"

Said the O.C., all on edge;

And a sub's pert "Out of petrol, Sir!"

Rang out like sacrilege.

Lower and lower—the whole expanse

Of heaven seemed one red ball,

And the cranking-up of the ambulance

Like a shot went through them all.

Not even the Ancient Mariner

As the Phantom Ship drew near

Thrilled as they thrilled at the sight of her

With such strange, ghostly fear.

And now to the naked eye she showed,

Propeller-blades all stripped,

And the sun as if through a grating glowed

As his rim to the sky-line dipped.

Thirty feet from the ground, just clear,
She skimmed the aerodrome,
And they rushed, C. O. and all, to cheer
A record volplane home.

Gently she lit as the leaves which fall
Nor stir a mirrored pool;
As from a spell set free, they all
Were like boys out from school.

But the C. O. started back, "My God!"
And never a man had seen
Such a riddled match-box of wire and rod
As now was the one machine.

While there sat hunched in the pilot's seat,
With glassy gaze ahead,
Jamming the levers with hands and feet,
The man that drove her—*dead!*

IN MEMORIAM

John McCrae

For ever immortal "in Flanders' fields."

THERE was a singer who made song
divine
Of the green grapes of Proserpine—
Love,
Born in full flower of the marvellous sea,
Was not more fair,
Sung of his voice,
Than she.
The hopeless acquiescence of all time
Once and for all was chanted in his rhyme.
Death—
Stripped equally of exultation and of dread--

Grew even more pale :
White were the poppies which he sang.
Not red.
What marvel youth, with sorrow out of mind,
The perfect litany of all grief should find
In strains
So sorrowful and yet so heavily sweet ;
And perfect rest,
Twining with him the poppies in her hair,
For all youth's pains.

* * * * *

He whom we mourn this day, he too did make
A song of poppies, but he cried not Sleep, but
Wake!

Red,
Red, red with blood his poppies were,
Not pale and wan—
Lift up thy head!
Lift up thy head, who mournest him with me,

And what a wonder he hath wrought now see!

In one brief hour

The centuries' symbol of all sleep and death

Now and for ever with immortal breath

Doth flower!

No longer bound where breasts and white
limbs show,

They grow

"Between the crosses row on row."

Sleep? O poppies red,

Made by his song more holy than the rose,

'Tis we,

We shall not sleep!

For, lo!

His word upon our inmost heart

Is graven more deeply than by all the art

Of him

Throughout all time

Lord of all rhyme,

As from the glories of a colonnade
Man turns, of old, to shrines in cloistral shade.

* * * * *

And youth shall kneel there
By this present shrine,
Learning a more divine
Than Proserpine.
While though his body shall in France find
rest,
Yea, the same rest France to her own brave
yields,
His soul shall stray,
By an infallible way,
Not through Elysian, but to Flanders' fields.

THE COWARD

○ WHY are you marching off to the war?

You're much too young to be there.

A bugle blew, and I thrilled all through!

And I tossed my cap in the air!

O why are you marching off to the war?

Will you cheer like that when you die?

'Fight!' said the King! Who's questioning?

A traitor, coward, or spy?

O why are you marching off to the war?

Speak out, man! Are you dumb?

I saw the star of Trafalgar,

And I heard Drake tapping his drum!

O why are you marching off to the war?

Blanched white to the lips with wrath?

Aloof stood I till a nation's cry

Like Christ's from the Cross rang forth!

O why are you marching off to the war?

And why are you muttering so?

*Pah! It's always the same for the patrons of the
game,*

But someone's got to go.

* * * * *

And why did you *not* march off to the war?

Have you mother, or child, or wife?

At home I stayed. I was afraid,

And now I must take my life.

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

“WHO'S that digging like a slave?”

“One that said he would not fight”

“What he digs should be his grave,

Heaped with earth and tamped down
tight!”

“Conscience? Conscience! I'll not mince

Nice fine phrases on his lies!

Coward! Coward! See him wince,

Crooked to his very eyes!”

“Martyr? He's the same as all!

Out for notoriety!

Christ's as far as Pilate's Hall—

Never to the bitter Tree!”

"Gibes and taunts don't hurt the skin!

They'll take care they keep *that* whole!

Whose was that voice breaking in,

'No, they only hurt the soul!'"

"Who's that digging like a slave?"

"One that said he would not fight."

"What he digs should be his grave—

Yet— I wonder—is he right?"

IN BLIGHTY

I, at mid-point of life,
I took a knife.
I felt the blade.
I heard a serpent hiss,
"Death's lips are sweet to kiss—
Are you afraid?"

Then on the world there burst
War, and among the first
That went was I.
But in the hottest strife
I could not lose my life—
I did *not* die.

Once I crossed No-Man's Land
To some poor devil, and
Got—this knee.

(Then, from a bed near by,
"Some people can't half lie!
Got the V. C.")

Now, as upon the wall
I watch the flies that crawl,
Rings in my ear
Once more the serpent's hiss,
"Death's lips are sweet to kiss. . . ."
And what I ask is *this*,
What *did* I fear?

* * * * *

This is the very knife!
Answer me!—Death or Life?

THE FALLEN COMRADES

WHOSE eyes are those that burn with
bale

As from the cannons' flame?

Whose cheeks are those that are so pale?

Who hisses out my name?

It's not the sergeant in the street

Who makes me feel so small;

Without one qualm his gaze I meet,

And stand up straight and tall.

He spins the same old tawdry yarn,

And waves the Union Jack,

Then says, "Let's 'ave a drink! Come ahn!"

And slaps me on the back.

I hear him out, and speak him fair,

“I’m very sorry, but . . .”

And as I go I hear him swear,

“Another Goddam nut!”

It’s not Humanity or God,

Or any high-flown lie

That makes a double slave the clod

That needs must kneel and sigh.

Not mine to ape an outraged sense

Of pretty right and wrong;

Too plain, too plain beyond pretence

The battle’s to the strong.

But though my “King-and-Country’s Call”

Invites satiric wit,

And this dull prate of God and all

Makes honest men to spit—

Still, still those eyes burn deep with bale
As from the cannons' flame,
And still those cheeks are ashy pale,
I hear stil! hissed my name.

O Comrades, Comrades of my youth!
Ah youth so sweet, so sweet!
All slain! All slain! But still the truth
Shall be as far and fleet!

To-day ye fight a friend of old
Beside an ancient foe,
But what shall be when this is told
No man doth surely know.

Yet though ye die for gods unknown,
And rest in graves unnamed,
I cannot wholly stand alone,
Or wholly be unshamed.

For they read well who give them hail
That dare, what e'er it be,
Above the weakling souls that quail
If they themselves but see.

Ye lust, but do your lust, not dream—
And thence alone are great—
So Death and Danger do but gleam
With mystery and fate.

So though I fear no "patriot's" taunt,
And hear no voice from Heaven,
For those dear eyes in cheeks so gaunt
My service shall be given.

YPRES PARADE

April 28th, 1918

HERE—and there!

First the thrill, then the chill!

The thrill,

At the sound of the drum—

The chill,

As we think of some.

The thrill,

At the bullets' hum—

The chill

That follows some.

First the thrill, then the chill!

Here—and there!

THE CONSCRIPT

CONSCRIPTS! Sentence in a word,
Like a lash is on you laid;
Cheers give place to jibe and gird
As you make your first parade:
Still in civies, heads hung down,
Sick at last for khaki-brown!

Conscripts! Well you shamble on,
Naked in your paltry fear;
Down to death for you have gone
Thousands who should yet be here:
Thousands of good men and true,
Down to death for such as you.

Conscripts! Sportsmen, dudes—and scum!

Ill from smiles shall they refrain

Who have felt but one thought drum

Four long years upon their brain:

Children, widows, wives to give

All they have while these yet live!

Conscripts!—Did one answer me?

“Hard it was, but yet I waited.

Shall I make apology

Since I but once more am baited?

Was that man a volunteer

Who was driven by a jeer?

Conscript! Not the less I burn

For my Country and my King,

Though I dared to take my turn,

Knowing life no little thing

To be taken up or laid

Down till all was fully weighed.

Conscript! Would that from the start
All had been conscripted, or
None were now, so with one heart
All, none first or last, might war:
Conscript, volunteer, alike,
To the enemy's heart shall strike.

Conscript! Judged I those who went?—
Of their own free-will not all—
Judge not those who now are sent,
Few afraid if they shall fall”

* * * * *

Then 'twas I who hung my head—
Nothing more to him I said.

SPRING—1916

O SPRING, what message dost thou bring
this year—

Arrayed in red, not green, this second time?

Last year we hoped, but now dull, sickening
fear

Stalks ghost-like at the very feast of rhyme.

How can we say that harvest-tide shall reap

Life and not Death, remembering the past?

When with each month the conflict grows
more deep,

And every day seems bloodier than the last?

Pass on, O Spring! What comfort dost thou
hold?

We can but gather amaranth and rue.

What though thy flowers blossom as of old,

If in our hearts thou canst not break forth
too?

The glory of the daffodils shall gleam,
Yet in their beauty shall no eye rejoice;
Only the crimson tulip now shall seem
For one brief moment like a flaming voice.

The scent of violets shall fill the air,
Yet shall no memory quicken at their breath:
Of all thy perfumes shall the breezes bear
Only the incense of the flowers of death.

Narcissi and White Hyacinths and May,
The Lilies of the Valley—these shall be
The only flowers proper to this day,
And even these shall be but mockery.

Theirs is the Beauty that with Truth is one,
The bitter sorrow that is sweet withal;
But in this carnage that affronts the sun,
What wine is mingled with the myrrh and
gall?

Lo, at the first, we said that Christ's own
peace

At last, at last upon the earth should reign;

We warred that War from this time on should
cease,

And in that hope we did not count the slain.

But now for peace in name alone we fight,

Gone is the glory of that great crusade:

Behind the banner of our boasted right,

Hideous and naked and unshamed stands
Trade.

Trade in the shell-torn furrows of this Spring,

Still drenched in blood, and while they yet
gape wide,

The dragon's teeth of bloodier war doth fling,

Whilst Christ our Jason is still crucified!

BALLADE OF PRINCE CHARLIE

WHERE'S Prince Charlie gone to? Say!

He was all the world to me!

Out upon you! Clear the way!

Who rides past? I cannot see!

'Tis his horse, but 'tis not he—

Looking always straight ahead!

Could I reach and touch his knee—

Something in my heart is dead!

'Tis a king upon his bay

Brooding on some great decree,

And his eyes are grave and grey

With a high austerity.

I suppose kings so must be,

Yet—were Charlie here instead!

Hate and love with him were free—

Something in my heart is dead!

Where's Prince Charlie gone to? Eh?

Fetch me out my History!

When was Charlie crowned King, pray?

'Tis a mage with baleful dree

Has me in his circles three—

Just to hear it even said

Makes the world change visibly—

Something in my heart is dead!

ENVOI

Ah, though one Prince Charlie stay

Ever Prince in Books I've read,

One *I* know's a King to-day—

Something in my heart is dead!

A BIRTHDAY BAILLADE

“I SHALL never, never grow old!”

Have your way, my lad, have your way!

'Tis only old fogies that hold

We crumble to dust, and decay.

In vain I cry out to you, “Stay!

Remember the years and their rue!

The world was not made for mere play!”—

For I once had the same visions too!

“All I touch shall turn into gold!”

Well, it may, my lad, well it may!

'Tis a tale that's so often been told,

It surely must happen some day!

And indeed, if you think of it, pray,

Why shouldn't it happen to you?

To such logic 'tis hard to cry Nay—

For I once had the same visions too!

"My fame round the world shall be rolled!"

So you say, my lad so you say!

"Though the sun and the stars shall grow cold,

It shall echo for ever and aye!"

Ah, yes! Though perpetual grey

Has clouded me half my life through,

In vain on such dreams I inveigh—

For I once had the same visions too!

ENVOI

Health and Wealth and Fame, then, undone,

Be yours, lad, whatever you do!

Ah, what though I crumble to mould—

For I once had the same visions too!

BALLADE OF A FAN

I HAVE never seen the snow
On Mount Fuji, I have ne'er
Seen the cherry-blossom blow
As they say it blossoms there—
It is nothing—I don't care—
Though I've never seen Japan,
I shall all the same declare
I am none the less a fan!

I'm a fan, I'd have you know,
Though no Geisha anywhere
Ever waved me to and fro
In her hand so small and fair
Till my zephyrs stirred her hair—
As a Geisha only can—
Yet I just as stoutly swear
I am none the less a fan!

If I say it, it is so!
 Contradict me if you dare!
I'm a fan, I say, although
 I have never made a flare!
 And my uttermost despair,
Ever since the world began,
 Is the tail which peacocks wear—
I am none the less a fan!

ENVOI

Ah, it seems long years ago
 Since I first the bases ran,
And I cannot hit or throw—
 But I'm none the less a fan!

BALLADE OF SHAKESPEARE

“WHO wrote the plays?” Ha, ha!
Ho, ho!

The gauntlet is flung down once more!
'Tis well not blood, but ink doth flow
When scribes and critics go to war!
Yet *let* them welter in their gore,
Although not red, but black it be!
The hideous carnage I ignore—
Shakespeare is Shakespeare still to me!

“Who wrote the plays?” Just so! Just so!
I *think* that you asked me once before!
Shakespeare, I said; but you said No—
In fact, I fear that you *almost* swore!
This is a breach (that one must deplore)
Of all good manners, and you'll agree
That we should argue, not rave and roar—
Shakespeare is Shakespeare still to me!

"Who wrote the plays?" For God's sake, go:

If you will persist, Sir, there's the door!

It's not polite, I admit, but—blow!

Critics and scribes are all a bore!

Shakespeare or Bacon, Bacon or

Shakespeare, fol lal riddle de dee!

Perish their musty, fusty lore!

Shakespeare is Shakespeare still to me!

ENVOI

"Who wrote the plays?" To him we owe

A debt more deep than the soundless sea.

And I confess, though I may be slow—

Shakespeare is Shakespeare still to me!

MISTLETOE AND HOLLY

HOLLY-BOUGH and Mistletoe

Hanging in the Hall!

Shall I meet her? Yes or No?

Will she victim fall?

Heartless lover thus to take

Mistletoe for cover!

Guarded so thy love to make!

Shame upon thee lover!

Holly-bough and Mistletoe!

Surely it is folly!

Shall I meet her? Yes or No?

Mistletoe and Holly!

NOT MADE WITH HANDS

WHEN I behold some temple of the past,
Its marble pillars tottering to their fall,
Its idols shattered and its fanes o'ercast,
Its friezes shredded on the crumbling wall—

I can but mourn, I cannot stop my tears,
To think that beauty so sublime must die:
And all the woes of all the grief-filled years
Drive down upon me like a cloud-wracked sky.

Ah, who is he whom ruin will not touch?
Who hath not tried betimes to build some
place
Fit for the glory of his God—ah, such
That there he might behold him—face to face?

Slowly upon me Christ's great light expands—
O Many Mansions! House Not Made With
Hands!

*In Collaboration with
the Rev. J. B. Dollard.*

ROSES

I NTO the House of Death I stepped—

What business had I there?

I could not weep with them that wept,

My words a stumbling prayer.

I stole to the open bier; I saw

The face and folded hands;

But who save Love in Death's great awe

Both sees *and* understands?

I turned away with hanging head,

Walking as in a mist;

As those that from the altar tread

After the Eucharist.

Then suddenly upon me burst,
As from a broken jar
Sealed unto sorrow from the first,
All fragrances that are.

I looked, and saw what Death had hid,
A thousand roses heaped,
High, red and white, o'er the ebon lid,
Whose scent the air so steeped.

And then I heard what I would say,
If any word might be:
'Twas roses, roses all the way
Came echoing to me.

And, oh, if *roses all the way*
To grief but grief doth lend,
Then let me like a whisper say,
'Twas roses at the end.

IN THE HEART OF A FRIEND

THERE is the peace of children's sleep,

When, *Gentle Jesu* said,

All innocence and angels steep

The airs about each bed—

Yet trouble even then begins—

Will God be angry with my sins?

There is the peace, when, tired from games,

Yet filled with breathless joy,

The boy broods on heroic names,

The girl upon some boy—

But hero after hero falls,

The boy slights girls for bats and balls.

There is the peace which lovers know,
 When, each from each withdrawn,
They dream as though 'twere long ago
 The deep night's bliss till dawn—
Yet oft ere dawn it proves to have been
But sated passion once more keen.

There is the peace of age; to some
 A halo silver-fair:
Unto my mother this is come,
 And, God knows, it is fair —
Yet give to me the sword that breaks
Ere *one* spot, tarnished, rusts and flakes.

There is the peace of God, which I
 Shall never win, on earth;
Glad in the thought that I shall cry
 Till death, as from my birth—
Truth is too high, too deep, too wide,
That I should e'er rest satisfied.

There is the peace which I have found
 Within your heart, dear friend;
In *this* peace all my peace is bound
 Until life's very end—
And this is true I surely know
Because at first we quarrelled so.

* * * * *

Sharp as we fought such friends to be,
So sweet is our felicity.

THE POET

To A. S. H.

THE poet stands apart—
As the world thinks—
And from springs at the earth's heart,
Alone, he drinks.

Madness divine, men say,
Misreading him, is his,
And, nodding, turn away
From too deep mysteries.

But, ah, too well he knows,
Himself, his circling fate;
Too human, all men's throes
Depress him or elate.

Communion too intense
Divides him who would be
One with their every sense
Of joy or agony.

In youth, from youth estranged,
Thought clogs his running feet;
While some boy's glee unchanged
Pulls age down from his seat.

So, when a boy, boys say,
If he but one hour dream,
"Come out! You never play
By field or wood or stream!"

Now, when a man, and men
Would make him as themselves,
Down, down he throws his pen,
And laughs with fays and elves.

Thus is he out of time,
Ever misunderstood,
Made by the gift of rhyme
Old only as his mood.

THE LITTLE SON OF THE PROPHET

The Little Son of The Prophet is a young lad to whom The Prophet is strangely drawn, and who, The Prophet hopes, will, in due time (indeed, ere long, for he feels that his fire is departing), take up his mantle when it shall fall from him.

The lad's spiritual charm and eagerness seem, however, to The Prophet, to be over fitful for one destined to so high a charge, and his equal delight in those other times when he is free from the strange spell which The Prophet exerts over him causes The Prophet pain.

In this pain The Prophet is driven to examine his own way of life, from the time when he was convicted of sin and went forth into the wilderness, until now.

The Poem opens with The Prophet reflecting that, prior to this strange affection, he would have denounced the sins of his neophyte not less than those of the Philistines.

He then wonders if this affection has risen from some long-crushed love of his own youth, and, brooding in this manner, he comes to question not only the wisdom of having denied himself all pleasure, but also his right to compel others to the same denial. He accuses himself of spiritual pride, and challenges the validity of his whole mission.

Thus the winning grace of The Little Son of The Prophet opens up for The Prophet the whole problem of the conflict between the desires of the human heart and the life of ascetic dedication, with the final cleaving doubt of the revelation of God's will.

HAD I struck you full in the face,
And said, "As God liveth, you lie!
Look now to your sword and His grace,
If on Him such as thou mayest cry!"

You had stood to your ground and returned
Blow for blow, and a thrust for a thrust:
Alas! That mine anger is turned,
From the flame that it was, into dust!

I should know if you are the Lord's,
As you say by your soft-spoken mouth,
Or one of the Philistine hordes
Come up from the lands of the south.

But O Son, my Son, little Son!
(I am soft, somehow—is it age?—
I should curse you as once I had done,
But something has failed from my rage)

It is long, it is long since the day
 Jehovah cried out on my sin,
And I rose while the dawn was yet grey,
 With naught round my loins but a skin.

And with locusts and honey for bread,
 And the parched, desert pools for my drink,
Impalpably driven, I sped
 Till I came to the world's very brink.

It is long since I came back, O Tyre,
 From the Pit that I saw there beneath;
And I thundered, O Sidon, the fire
 And the whirlwind of Judgment and Death!

"Ah Jehovah! Jehovah! Declare
 Not yet from Thy Word have I failed!
Let my heart and my soul be laid bare,
 Not yet from Thy trust have I quailed!"

So I cried to Him just ere you came,
O my Son, my Son, little Son!
More loudly protesting the flame
As I knew in my heart it was done.

Did I cry for some girl I had known,
Some curious way all these years,
Since I thought that I went forth alone,
Now remembered in bodings and fears?

I know not! Nay only I know
I was strangely, infinitely tired—
In the heart of my out-thundered woe
Peace, only peace, I desired.

For O Son, my Son, little Son!
I dreamed of that hour when I hurled
From my couch at the day-break to run
Till I came to the edge of the world.

And I thought, Lo, my strength is long passed ;
I have spoken, and they have not heard ;
On him shall my mantle be cast,
And he shall go forth with my word.

And the flame of my prophecy fired ;
As of old in the trance I was rapt ;
I forgot that I ever was tired,
Till suddenly, reed-like, I snapped.

* * * * *

For a son of my flesh did I cry,
When I said, "Lo, the son of my soul!"
And at once as the light of mine eyes
I loved you and silently stole
With a whisper, half glad, half afraid,
"Are you he? Are you he? You are he!"
As though I had spoke to a maid,
Not a lad in the height of his glee.

Was it fancy I caught in your mirth,
Like the ground of an infinite theme,
The chant of the tides of the earth
Flooding in on a silver-voiced stream?

And I laid on your shoulder a hand,
Forswearing the kiss I had given,
Torn in twain by Jehovah's command,
Yet driven, and driven, and driven

To cry out His Word to your beauty,
Though with flowers I covered His rod—
O iron and pitiless duty
Thou layest on Thy servants, Lord God!

* * * * *

The world did not know it, I poured
The vials of wrath while I wept.
I spake with my lips for the Lord,
But to you in the stillness I crept.

"O my people, my people," I cried,
But I thought, Am I better than they?
I have laboured for naught but my pride:
Has the Lord but to me shown the way?

And the infinite pathos of life
Flooded in on my soul like a wave,
And, broken, I cried from the strife
For one moment of love ere the grave.

And the bodings and fears that I knew,
Ere you came, O my Son, little Son!
They clustered and clustered round you,
Till you and that pathos were one.

I struck the world full in the face,
But I only could look in your eyes,
And plead with my own that God's grace
In your heart like a well-spring might rise.

And they shone for a space with new light.

And your hair as a prophet's was blown,
But, ah Watchman! What of the night?

Ah, what was your faith when alone?

I watched you and watched you. I know

That you felt that I doubted your word....
Were hurt....O the pity.... but oh!

My heart cried out, "Has he heard?"

You were splendid in unsullied youth,

Had you need to the desert to run?
Had you need of repentance and ruth,
When your life was hardly begun?

And I said, I am old, he is young,

And the youth that I had was a day,
He is wiser than I, and I flung
My heart and my soul in your play.

And ah, had you known how I quaffed
The wine of youth's cup once again,
How the heart and the soul of me laughed—
Not a jot of my mirth did I feign.

But sometimes, betweentimes, I burned
With the old, unslakeable thirst,
But now you no longer turned,
So it seemed, with a flash as at first.

Had I pleaded too often and long?
Or perhaps you already had heard?
Did I give you one note for a song?
Did my prophecy whine to a gird?

But now it is long since we met,
O my Son, my Son, little Son!
And it may be I wrong you, but yet,
Ah, what have you done—have you *done*?

Now judge you I dare not: 'tis past,
The time of my judgment and wrath;
But on whom shall my mantle be cast,
And who with my word shall go forth?

Wild honey and locusts—ah, must
These be your meat ere you learn
The zeal of the Lord—from the dust
Must you drink the parched pool ere you
burn?

Yet I called down fire from above
To wither my people with flame,
And to you I have pleaded with love,
And oh, little Son, 'tis the same!

I believed (oh, I half believe still!)
That *once* you did hear, and I cried....
But you felt I had pitted my will
Against yours, and you shrank back in
pride.

And a gulf that widens each day
Now sunders our paths, and we go
Each one on his separate way—
Ah, whither? Would God I could know!

I could suffer the pain of my loss,
Talk and play, together, like prayer;
Yea, all but my hope were as dross
Did I know but my hope were your care.

Let me go to the desert again,
Lest I fret you, my Son, little Son!
It will pass, all this yearning and pain—
When my dust and the desert's are one.

Or once more shall I come back at length,
And find that my word *was* approved?
Hear a voice, aye, your voice in its strength,
O Son, little Son, so beloved!

