



TO THE
CANADIAN
MOTHERS

AND
THREE OTHER
POEMS

By DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT



1917

H.F.

Sold for the Benefit of the Prisoners of War Fund

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TO

FLIGHT LT. R. KENNETH SLATER, R. F. C

AND

FLIGHT LT. ARTHUR S. BOURINOT, R. F. C.

Prisoners of War in Germany

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D. C. S.

TO THE
CANADIAN MOTHERS

ST. JULIEN
COURCELETTE
VIMY RIDGE

WHY mourn thy dead, that are the world's
possession?

These, our Immortals—Shall we give them up
To the complaint of private loss and dole?
Nay—mourn for them, if mourn thou must,—
Grief is thy private treasure;
Thy soul alone can count its weight or measure.
But we who know they saved the world
Think of them joined to that unwithering throng,
Who in the long dread strife
Have thought and fought for Liberty:
When she was but a faint pulsation in the mind,
The faintest rootlet of a growing thought,
They nourished her with tears
And gave their dreams to add depth to her foliage;
And when the enemy ravaged her bright blossoms,
Drenched her with their rich blood
To prove she lived and was the ever-living.
These are the true Immortals,
The deathless ones that saved the world.

* * *

Nay, weep, if weep thou must
And think upon thy lad, onetime in trust
To fortune; of his gallant golden head
And all the wayward sanctities of childhood;
Of how he crowned thy life with confidences;
Of the odour of his body, lulled with sleep,
Confusing thy dim prayers for some best future
With the sheer love that is the deepest:
False fortune has destroyed her hostages!

Old joys are bitter, bitter as very death!
Let break thy heart and so be comforted.

* * *

Be comforted, for we have claimed the child
And taken him to be with light and glory;
Not as we knew him in his earthly days
The lovely one, the virtuous, the dauntless,—
Or one who was a boaster, thick with faults
Perchance,—but as the index of the time
The stay and nurture of the world's best hope
The peerless seed of valour and victory.

* * *

Here in a realm beyond the fading world,
We garner them and hold them in abeyance
Ere we deliver them to light and silence—
The vestiges of battle fallen away—
Fragments of storm parting about the moon,—
Here in the dim rock-chambers, garlanded
With frail sea-roses perfumed by the sea
That murmurs of renown, and murmuring,
Scatters the cool light won by the ripple
From the stormless moon, cloistered with memory,
Whose dim caves front the immortal vistas
Plangent with renown, here they await
The light, the glory and the ultimate rest.

* * *

Be comforted,—nay sob, if sob thou must,
Cover thy face and dim thy hair with dust,

And we who know they live
Gather thy dead in triumph—
Exalted from the caves of memory
Purified from the least assoil of time,—
And lay them with all that is most living,
In light transcendent,
In the ageless aisles of silence,
With the Immortals that have saved the world.

TO
A CANADIAN AVIATOR
WHO DIED FOR
HIS COUNTRY
IN FRANCE

TOSSED like a falcon from the hunter's wrist
A sweeping plunge, a sudden shattering noise,
And thou hast dared, with a long spiral twist,
The elastic stairway to the rising sun.
Peril below thee, and above, peril
Within thy car; but peril cannot daunt
Thy peerless heart: gathering wing and poise,
Thy plane transfigured, and thy motor-chant
Subduéd to a whisper—then a silence,—
And thou art but a disembodied venture
In the void.

* * *

But Death, who has learned to fly,
Still matchless when his work is to be done,
Met thee between the armies and the sun;
Thy speck of shadow faltered in the sky;
Then thy dead engine and thy broken wings
Drooped through the arc and passed in fire,
A wreath of smoke—a breathless exhalation.
But ere that came a vision sealed thine eyes,
Lulling thy senses with oblivion;
And from its sliding station in the skies
Thy dauntless soul upward in circles soared
To the sublime and purest radiance whence it sprang.

* * *

In all their eyries eagles shall mourn thy fate,
And leaving on the lonely crags and scaurs
Their unprotected young, shall congregate

High in the tenuous heaven and anger the sun
With screams, and with a wild audacity
Dare all the battle danger of thy flight;
Till weary with combat one shall desert the light,
Fall like a bolt of thunder and check his fall
On the high ledge, smoky with mist and cloud,
Where his neglected eaglets shriek aloud,
And drawing the film across his sovereign sight
Shall dream of thy swift soul immortal
Mounting in circles, faithful beyond death.

SOMEWHERE ✓
IN FRANCE

THE storm was done
And fragments of the sun
Fell on the great Cathedral front
Of saints and heroes,
And touched a woman's form
Vanishing through the porch,
She pushed the leathern door
And saw the great rose-window like a torch
Colour the milliard ghosts of the dead incense.
She paused at the *bénitier*
And trembled down the aisle.
She thought to make a prayer,
She knelt but could not pray—
A month on yesterday
Her lover had been killed at Verdun.

* * *

Deep grief dawns slowly
And the light was on her soul.

* * *

She thought on God and called on Christ,
And fainted in her woe,
And lo!
As she leant against the pillar,
Pale like a saint—still
Than death—from out the stone
Thrilled a warm tone,
As if an Angel spoke:

* * *

Thou art not here alone,

Thy sorrow woke
One who once loved as thou,
Long, long ago.
Noble he was—and he stooped low,
His princely people said,
To crown me.
Him they banished oversea
To kill his love;
They could not—this have I for proof,
They killed me here instead.
They walled me up at night within the stone
When this church was abuilding—
A narrow niche—and I was all alone.
It did not take me long to die,
And now my little dust has enough room.
But love can never die,
And when I felt my heart cry out in thine
I rose after three hundred years
To kiss your tears,
And tell you that our little wells of love
Have springs in the great deeps thereof.
And this I know in mine own soul,
And by the blessed rood,
There is a solitude
Beyond his death and thine
Where time shall have no hours,
Where you shall be together.
Till then above mischance
Thy soul is guarded in the Soul of France.

* * *

And then the lovely shape within the stone
Fell into silence and a little dust
Fell in the silence.

* * *

But she who was so strangely comforted,
Left the dim shrine,
And pushed the leathern door,
And stood upon the threshold in the shine
Struck from a thousand banners in the sky,
Where a great tempest-sunset marching by
Deployed before the portal,
As all the flags of France were beating there
In the flushed air,
Triumphant and immortal.

TO
A CANADIAN LAD
KILLED IN THE
WAR

 NOBLE youth that held our honour in keeping,
And bore it sacred through the battle flame,
How shall we give full measure of acclaim
To thy sharp labour, thy immortal reaping?
For though we sowed with doubtful hands, half sleeping,
Thou in thy vivid pride hast reaped a nation,
And brought it in with shouts and exultation,
With drums and trumpets, with flags flashing and
leaping.

* * *

Let us bring pungent wreaths of balsam, and tender
Tendrils of wild-flowers, lovelier for thy daring,
And deck a sylvan shrine, where the maple parts
The moonlight, with lilac bloom, and the splendour
Of suns unwearied; all unwithered wearing
Thy valour stainless in our heart of hearts.