

ARMAGEDDON
AND OTHER POEMS

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QUEEN'S FIELD AMBULANCE, C.E.F.

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ARMAGEDDON.

The crimson clouds of war close down about
The world, all trembling with reverberation
Of crashing cannon and the warrior shout
Of mighty nation charging against nation;
The blaring bugles shriek above the din,
As army after army rolls to death;
Volcanic fires bursting from within
Light up the lurid conflict with their breath.
The hungry ocean rises in its might,
The bolts of heaven cleave the broken sky.
'Tis Armageddon! 'Tis the fateful day
When man and beast and nature join in fight
While gods and demons laugh to see them die,
Till earth, and heaven, and hell are burned away.

TO DUTY.

Thou who didst bind the bondsman to the free,
The freeman to his king, the king to thee,—
Dread spirit who hast led this nation forth,
Grasping our best with an imperious hand,
Pouring the strength and valour of the North
To death and glory in a ravaged land,—
Thou who hast taken all our youth could give,
Blinding and maiming, crushing out its breath,
Bidding the hero die, the coward live
To eat and drink and meet a coward's death,—
Strengthen our hearts to fight the battle through,
To reap the harvest that in tears we sow;
Oh Duty, hold us to thy service true
That we may rise triumphant o'er the foe.

TO FRANCE; MARCH 1916.

Now is thy hour, France, to stand or fall!
The Hun in desperation hurls his might
And heated cannon thundering day and night
Against thy hard-held frontier's northern wall.
Nobly thy armies answer to the call,
With fearless hearts and tireless hands they fight
And gladly die for thee and for the Right,
In that high courage Death cannot appall.
Shall all their sacrifices count as nought?
Their love of honor and their patriot fire?
Can death and desolation be the lot
Of those whom Liberty and Truth inspire?
Or has the foe, with hate and malice hot,
Kindled the brand to light his funeral pyre?

NOT THERE THEY SLEEP.

They do not lie beneath that sod
Where still the cannon wheels bite deep,
They hear not now the noise of war,
In other fields they sleep.

In other fields they sleep and dream
Nor wake to hear the bugle call,
And each day comrades join them there
While still the heroes fall.

They dream of English countryside,
Or roam once more the northern down,
They smell again the salt-steeped breeze
That sweeps the sea-port town.

Then weep not o'er that broken cross,
It is not there the heroes lie,
In other fields they sleep and dream
Beneath a fairer sky.

KILLED IN ACTION.

We find your name upon the fatal list
Which day by day our anxious eyes have read;
You whom we loved have won your place among
The mighty army of Canadian dead.

And was it fighting in the captured trench
Where the last foe put up resistance still?
In the wild charge, or in the brave defence
Of some position on a numbered hill?

We know not where you made your sacrifice;
It matters not, for this untold we know,—
For Canada, your home, you fought and fell
Still with a fearless face turned toward the foe.

INVOCATION.

Farewell, oh hills, ye pine-clad hills of home!
My path is set midst scenes of strife and death;
Far from thy crimson sunsets must I roam,
Beyond thy upland breezes morning breath.
If, broken and alone, my strength should fail,
My life-blood ebb and life itself grow weak,
When o'er my eyes is drawn the dimming veil,
Then let the Spirit of thy Beauty speak,
That I may hear again thy singing streams
That softly murmur where the shadows lie,
Lifting to laughter where the sunlight gleams
Till in the ocean all their music die;
And so, in peace, my spirit may flow on
Through whispering darkness to the silent dawn.

OUT OF THE WEST.

Out of the west they come,
Into the East they go,
And ever the throbbing battle-drum
Beats on against the foe.

Along the sunlit street
Rank upon rank they swing,
And the rhythmic tread of their marching feet
Keeps time with the songs they sing.

Though each may have his fears,
Thoughts that he may not tell,
Though the smiles at last be close to tears
They bid a glad farewell.

Their feet are turning home
From prairie-land and hill,
Whatever paths these men may roam
Their hearts are British still.

O Britain! These are thine,
These are thy heroes true,
Who seek the distant battle-line
To die for love of you.

Out of the West they come,
Into the East they go,
But ever the throbbing battle-drum
Beats on against the foe.

NEW YEAR'S EVE, 1915.

Dead are the dreams of yesterday,—
Fond thoughts of love, high hopes of glory;
They passed away with the dying day
As I recalled the past year's story;
On every wind I heard the wail
Of comrades fallen in the fight,
And every breeze that lifts a sail
Brought grisly phantoms through the night.

I saw the Teuton hordes roll down,
Wave upon wave of armored might;
I saw the waiting cannon frown
And belch their thunder on the night;
I saw brave Belgium unafraid
Meet gun with gun and blade with blade.

The Belgian plain lay strewn with dead,
The Belgian towns in ruin lay,
The German War-God raised his head
And naught his awful hand could stay.
And shall these crimes unpunished be
And murder march to victory?

A hundred thousand Englishmen
Went forth to aid the sons of France,
And on the Marne and at the Aisne
They broke the furious advance;
But still the German bulwarks stand
To terrorize the conquered land.

A vessel rose from out the wave,
All draped in black, with shell-torn side,
Bearing a thousand from their grave
Slain in one ghastly homicide;
Their hands uplifted to the sky,
"Avenge our death," they seem to cry.

At Festubert and at Ypres
I saw our own Canadians die;
At Anzac and at Suvla Bay
The heroes of Australia lie;
And o'er the graves where rest our dead
German and Turk triumphant tread.

This year is gone; around the world
The bells ring in another year;
The flag of battle still unfurled
Is stained with many a holy tear:
Dead are the dreams of yesterday,—
Fond thoughts of love, high hopes of glory;
They passed away with the dying day
As I recalled the past year's story.

THE CANADIANS AT LANGEMARCKE.

Ten thousand fell at Langemarcke,
Ten thousand neath the German guns;—
Ten thousand more to take their place
For these are Britain's sons.

On every side the gas poured in,
On every side screamed shot and shell,
On every side the battle's din,—
Around, one bloody hell.

"Forward!" their gallant captains cried;
Forward they charged but still in vain;
The heated guns on every side
Poured in their deadly rain.

But still they held the shattered trench,—
(They scarce could fight for piles of dead)—
But still they kept the broken line,
Their bayonets flashing red.

A glorious fight was theirs to fight,
A glorious death was theirs to die:
Beneath the raging tide of war
The lost at Langemarcke lie.

THE YEAR.

Once more the year rolls round to Spring,
Once more the budding maples bend
Beneath the balmy winds that sing
Of summer that will never end.

The streams burst forth in new-born mirth
And sweep the ice cakes to the sea;
Once more we smell the damp, brown earth
And hear the birds' glad minstrelsy.

From willowed bank and pine-clad hill
Their magic melodies ring clear;
We dream that Spring is with us still
And lo! the flowers of June are here!

And Summer comes and Summer goes;
The wild geese take their southward way;
All red and gold the maple glows,
Then fades and dies, and all is grey.

Across the lake the lone wind wails
The dying year's recessionary;
The birds are gone, the river fails;
Only the pines stand sentinel.

THE PRINCESS PATS.

Here's to the Princess Pats! The first who sailed
From Canada's fair shore,
The first to answer when their Empire called
Her armies forth to war.

Canadians all, though not Canadian-born,
For some from England came,
And some from Scotland, some from Erin's Isle,
Yet Canada's their fame.

They were the first to cross the treacherous sea
And reach their native strand,
The first to battle and the first to die
In Belgium's shattered land.

They held the bloody trench when charged the foe
In myriad array,
And hurled them back with mighty blow on blow,
Cheering to meet the fray.

A thousand massed beneath their standard then
When eastward first they sailed
To give their lives for Empire and for home—
And who can say they failed?

When next they answer to their muster-roll
In realms beyond our ken,—
Their gallant Colonel at their head once more,—
Thousands shall answer then.

They gave their lives to swell the mighty band
Whose fame can never die,
Whose deeds are told in every distant land
Where British banners fly.

AUTUMN.

Now wakes the dismal wind
Along the river,
And where the distant hills are lined
Dead branches shiver.

The yellow fields lie bare
Beneath the rain,
But all the beauty sleeping there
Shall wake again.

And where the brown leaves sigh,
Drifting and falling
Under the leaden autumn sky
Soft sleep is calling.

THE WHEEL.

Fresh as the sea-wind is thy voice to me,
Fresh as the white foam blown from wave to wave;
Bright as the stars through all eternity
Thine eyes shall light my soul beyond the grave.
Still the great ocean rolls from shore to shore
Bound to this earth by laws unknown to man;
Our spirits shall be free forever more,
Not held in bondage by the years' short span
This mortal life seems but a link called Time,
One revolution of the Eternal wheel
On which the blinded cattle still must climb,
Making to blinded gods a dumb appeal.
But I have broken through the veil of lies,
Led by your voice and guided by your eyes.

THE STAR.

I lifted up my hands to grasp the star—
Below me climbed the hills from steep to steep,
The seven oceans rolling from afar
Their hoarse complainings to the endless deep.
Before me shone the light of my desire;
I laughed, for now it seemed I stood alone,
My last foe trampled in the crimson mire
And every barrier of Fate o'erthrown.
I lifted up my hands—a voice was thrust
Through the vast heavens to my trembling soul,
Saying: "Your star is dust as you are dust.
Turn, for the earth beneath you is your goal."
Above, around, the midnight shadows slept;
From cloud to cloud the constellations crept.

TWO FACES

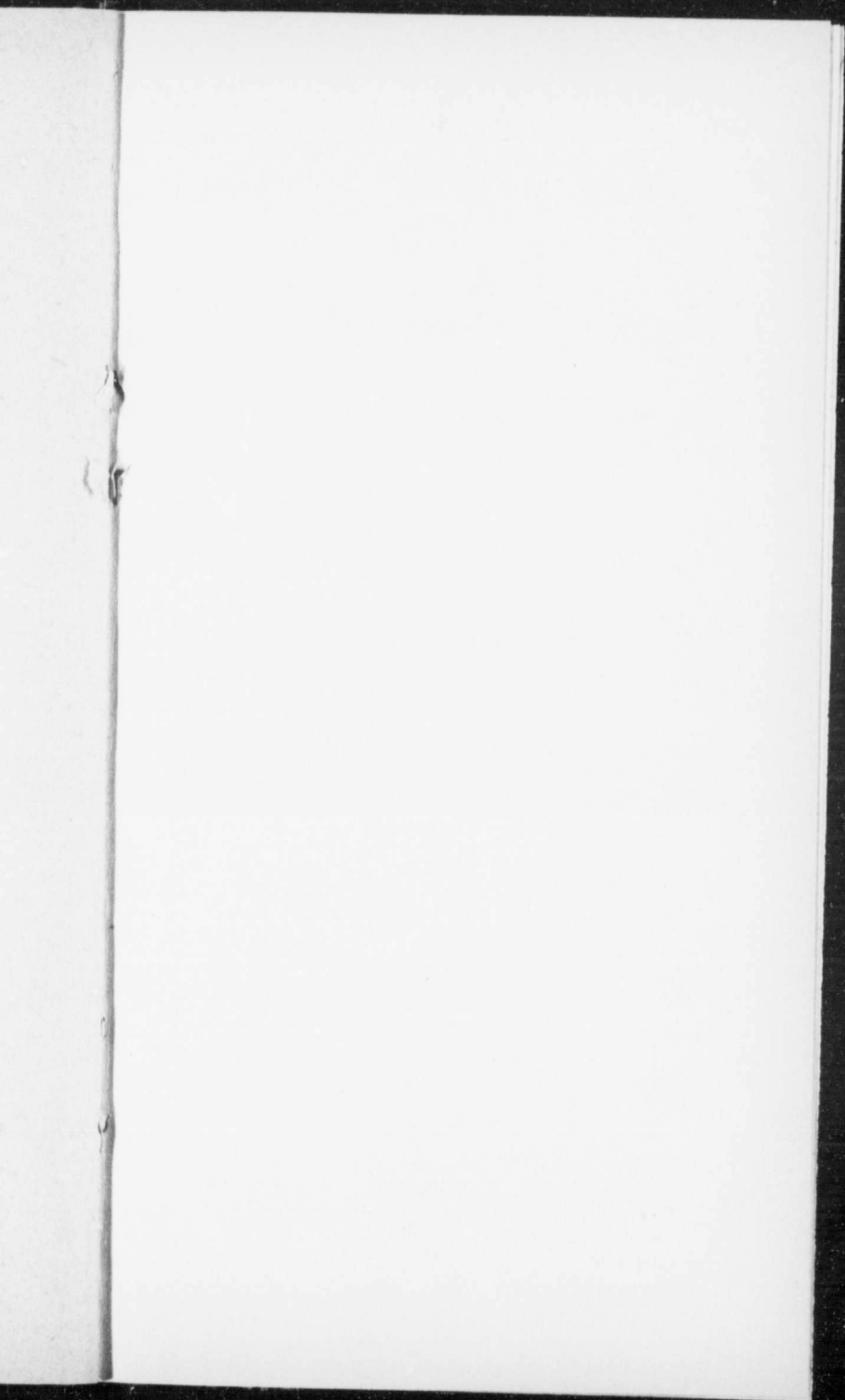
Two forms lay stretched beside the shattered gun
With limbs loose-thrown and faces both upturned:
On one the fiery brand of hatred burned,—
Lips drawn, as sneering at the carnage done
By his red hands; but in his eyes was fear
As if, in dying, he had met at last
The grim, grey ghosts of all his bitter past.
The other smiled as on some phantom dear;
A glimpse of home, a vision of his love
Soothed the last agony from those blue eyes
That still gazed upward to the smoke-wreathed skies,
Lifting his free soul to the heaven above.
Their dust shall mingle in the years to be;
What of their spirits through Eternity?

FAREWELL

Tonight I bid farewell
To all my heart holds dear;
The marching feet are a funeral knell;
The pulsing drums and the bagpipes' swell
Are but the dread recessional
Of all my heart holds dear.

The khaki lines have swung
In triumph down the street
With songs of war on every tongue,
With crimson banners far out-flung,
Till every heart to joy is strung
By tramp of marching feet.

Tonight I bade farewell
To all my heart held dear;
The drums beat glad recessional
To sorrow, doubt, and fear,
For death is but a lie
To vanish with the dawn,
And LOVE can never die
While honor leads us on.



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