

7-11-16
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"Peace on Earth; Good Will to Men."

The Unsilenced Song



SONNETS OF THE WAR
AND AFTER

By
ANNIE GLEN BRODER

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DEDICATION.



These Sonnets, written among the foothills of the Rockies, appeared at different stages of the war in "Montreal Herald," "Standard," and "Weekly Witness," over 2,000 miles to the East, and with their pages have been borne over the rolling prairies and through mountain passes from Coast to Coast, by whom read or unregarded I may never know.

But now that a joyful end has come to the great conflict, I think of mothers, fathers, wives, whose grief must mingle with their gladness; who have to take up life again with courage bereft of those they love. In deep sympathy I dedicate this little book to them; a tribute to the dear lads and brave men who laid down their lives for liberty; and in memory of my own mother and her sorrows of an earlier day.

ANNIE GLEN BRODER,

Calgary, Canada.

Christmas 1918.

THE SINGING CHRIST

Pure wine of willing sacrifice outpoured,
From the bare precincts of an upper room
The singing Christ passed to the Mount of gloom
His heart attune to Love. Nor scourge, nor sword
Nor cold, red drops of agony the Lord
Of Life could stay. Singer Divine, for whom
The sacred fire illumed th' approaching doom
And hosts of heaven sang in rich accord.
O happy souls who follow in His ways
From out rude hut or burrowed earth, sing on!
Light hearted lilt, or hymns of hope and prayer;
For Truth and Liberty your lot to share
Thro' toil and pain the singing Christ has gone
Before, and blends with His your loyal lays.

THE CALL

When rampant wrong threw down the gage of war,
With clarion call the Right awoke a world
That slumb'ring dreamed war was no more. Un-
furled

Again were the bold banners; sped afar
Were the great ships; and, thrilling to the core,
The hearts of men responded. Swift upcurled
The smoke of vivid batteries that hurled
Brave answers to the threat'ning cannons' roar.
Come forth! from languid ease to gallant deed.
Stand forth! for honor and humanity.

Let be security, smooth comfort, mirth;
And for the love of Christ and those who bleed
Under th' oppressor's rod in agony,
Fight for the Right and help redeem the earth!

THE AWAKENING

Warm at each nation's heart the lifeblood stirred;
There shone in every kindling eye a look
Of liberty, as if the spirit took

Command and custom's bondsmen inly heard
With solemn joy a new, soul-quickenng word
That voiced a finer freedom. They forsook
The path of pointless pleasure; oped the book
Of Life, by weak forebodings undeterred.

So great a history to write and read
All previous projects dull and void appeared;
As, page by page, they traced a record rare,
Mysterious bliss was theirs, and through the meed
Of poignant pain, perceived, no longer feared
The music of God's purpose filled the air.

THE WORKERS

Back from the line of battle reaching far
Across the seas, rally a million deep
The workers, in relays, who toil and sleep
And toil again. Their thoughts so centred are
On the main task, no idle dreams may mar
Their handiwork; no futile tears they weep
Theirs only, firm and steadfast faith to keep
With those who fight and follow freedom's star.
And the lone workers by the hearth, what prayers.
What memories, fancies, hopes and tender whims
Are mingled with the warp and woof, each
thread
So charged with love, the woven missive bears
The very life of those who weave, yet dims
Not loving eyes, but leaves vain tears unshed.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Fearful is modern war where fates are sealed,
Where finestrung nerves, and flesh and blood must
be
Pitted against nerveless machinery
Horror on horror piled, yet the high soul revealed
Of those who dare to die and scorn to yield;
Who at their post no clear design can see
But of the forces locked may grasp the key
That Right is ever master of the field.
What if the ruthless fiends who willed the fight
Could wreck in empty triumph all the gains
Of fruitful years—no real victory
Were theirs; for even in defeat's despite
The work goes forward, death itself but deigns
To show the way to immortality.

WHY?

"But why does God allow such wrongs to be"?
A frequent thought, a common question urged,
To which no common answer has emerged
From out the gloomy mystery that we
Call evil. Deeper could we delve and see
The bedrock Truth unmoved and undiverged
By frenzy's wild and raging waves that surged
From out of Chaos, unrestrained and free
To wreak disaster yet may not escape
The perfect law nor thwart the Perfect Will;
For times tho' tempest-tost Divinely scanned
Evoke a vaster future. Shuddering, agape
With horror though we be, we trust Him still
Who Cosmos holds in His unerring hand.

CHRIST AT THE CROSSROADS

Erect from earth with the high heaven for roof
Tall wayside crosses meet the wondering eyes
Of men from lands where holy emblems rise
In sacred fanes or humble homes aloof
From the worlds' highways—Yet, in very truth
'Tis there the Lord calls to His own. The wise
Make haste to follow Him in glad surprise
And put His gracious promise to the proof.
They, too, who in too frequent view have had
The sacred signs in vain before them set
In trouble turn unto their heart's true home.
Marching in battle order many a lad
Who thought to go his way alone has met
Christ at the Crossroads calling him to—Come!

THE CROSSLESS CALVARY

O sight most strange, of pathos infinite;
A crossless Calvary, the cruel rood
Crude emblem of insensate hate, its wood
Shattered by flying shell in desperate fight.
Upheld, alone, suffused in tender light
The Christ, with outstretched arms as if He would
Appeal once more to those who have withstood
Incarnate Love, dethroning right with might.
'Twould pierce the hardest heart with keenest pain
This symbol of Christ crucified anew
The atmosphere of cruelty His cross; and yet
Spirits oppressed may courage take again,
Hate but itself destroys, Love will subdue
And save tho' earth with blood and tears be wet.

THE CONQUEST OF THE AIR

For countless years the longing gaze of man
Surveyed the blue; envied the passing cloud
That floated lightly by, and cried aloud
To every wind of heaven that blithely ran
Its course, for buoyant power to span
The globe, in passionate appeal and proud
Against th' allotted place to man allowed
By Nature's limit since the world began;
Till, from the flight of birds that dipped and soared
And sailed o'er sea and land, the secret learned,
How swiftly rose triumphant man from earth
To air, thenceforth to watch and ward
For foe and friend: the prize that peace had earned
Destined at length in war to prove its worth.

HOMING WINGS

Home dwellers watching from the shelt'ring eaves
The bold young birds that from the nest one day
First flutter, then take wing and fly away
In keen delight of new-fledged strength (each leaves
The safe abode for the unknown); while grieves
Your tender heart, you would not have them stay
But gladly speed them though to fight and fray
To battle in the blue and seek for victory's sheaves;
Until the length'ning sunbeams tinge the trees
With glinting gold and all the air is soft
And fragrant with rich resinous ooze of pine,
And scent of clover wooed by honey bees
Rises from earth, then fain you look aloft
To where loved homing wings transfigured shine

"AFRAID OF FEAR"

Who conquers fear of fear and so attains
To bravest service in a soldier's guise
Is he who owns that rare and costly prize,
Th' imaginative gift with all its pains;
That—vivid—sees what every fact contains
Of joy or woe; feels all the tender ties
That tear the heartstrings, and far off descries
The dream beyond the sphere where horror reigns.
Lad with a poet's soul—a quiv'ring lyre
That thrills to passing dread or human need,
But to the plectrum of the test rings true:—
Afraid of fear! Ah yes! But so to inspire
With selfless beauty every golden deed
And, dying, triumph over fear anew.

PASSING SOULS

Free, as the flowers exhale in ambient air
Their ardent breath facing the light, that so
Their petals falling foremost, forth may flow
Their inmost essence, passing souls must fare;
One moment there, one moment—otherwhere,
By keen swift pang, or, lifeblood ebbing slow,
Thro' ling'ring mists of earth their spirits go;
For them has death no darkness, pain no care.
Life ending, Life begun the part they chose,
Tense with desire to make each effort tell
To fullest purpose. From th' ensanguined sod,
As from the bruised heart of reddest rose
The purest perfume rises—where they fell
For freedom, there their white souls go to God.

WE WHO STAYED BEHIND

“Why are we sure that Life and Light have claimed
Our loved ones, we who sing no mournful dirge
Who went not with them to the awful verge
But sped them forth with smiling lips that framed
“God keep you” that “Farewell” should not be named
In that last hour, nor sadly strove to urge
Love's selfish grief, but rising in full surge
Out of the deeps the truer Love proclaimed
By this we know that to th' unmeasured source
Of boundless Life, from Love to Love they go
Its well-springs flowing at a single touch
Of the Immutable, and in their shining course
The tides of love will bear us after, so
Should earthborn anguish count not overmuch.

WHITE NIGHTS

Crushed close within the breast, the harshest woes
May deaden grief by day—but oh! the waves
Of woe by night released! Relentless laves
The arid shore a tide that restless flows,
That crawls and creeps, and foaming as it goes,
Floods memory with thoughts of lonely graves.
The heart bereaved in anguish yearns and craves
Oblivion, yet hardly seeks repose.
Too wakeful and wide-eyed to weep it well
Could watch the long night thro'—such watching
 were
Of loyal love the price if the beloved
Had earthly need—But now, Ah God! to keep
Sad vigil were to shame the record fair
Of those who passed beyond where love is proved.

IO PAEAN

When on the lonely hillside mourn the ewes
And in the woods the birds their ravaged nest,
Their plaintive crying on a hopeless quest
The motherhood of Nature might accuse
That to their piteous pleading can refuse
An instant aid. Not deaf to their behest
Her age-long toil and travail do attest
Her care, their grief her grief renews.
'Tis Nature's voice that wails adown the wind,
Her mother heart that beats 'neath fluttering wings
And pays the price of love, of Mighty Love
That in his service doth Earth's beauty bind,
Whose anguish still an Io Paean sings
O'er loss and death and toward Love's goal
doth move.

PRISONERS OF WAR

With heavy hearts yet courage high, along
The unprogressive path of loathed toil
Or dull, enforced idleness, from coil
Of swift recurring thoughts war prisoners long,
But find no scope in action, find no tongue
For fears concerning loved ones, the turmoil
Of battle sweeter far than bonds that foil
The ardor of brave men their foes among.
Yet prisoners disarmed and harshly pent
With will unconquered quit them still like men.
Drawing an inward strength from source unseen,
A secret fount of fortitude, unspent,
Unspoiled by selfish glory; to their ken
The clue is given what freedom's self doth mean.

VICTIMS

O God, who hast Thy heeding ear inclined
To piteous cries and wordless prayers that throng
And pierce the murky air surcharged with wrong
Such as can never restitution find:
Though evil wills and deeds frail bodies bind
Grant that pure souls, untarnished, still can long
For Thee, and find Thy peace, and friends among,
Banish all thoughts of horror from the mind.
Christ, who the spotless flower extolled yet brake
No bruised reed; scorned not the sullied gold
Of love misspent, yet scattered at a word
Its base accusers; in His mercy take
All guiltless victims to His care and hold
Them stainless, not one poignant plea unheard.

THE WOUNDED RETURN

With backward look but forward longing come
The wounded, worn and eager, hurrying slow
Each with his scar of war, his share of woe
Hard hit but still undaunted, loving home
The dearer for the cause that bade him roam
A foreign field and strike a sturdy blow
Or—unknown victim of an unseen foe—
To cast his lot for liberty. The foam
The good ship gaily gliding homeward-bound
Leaves in her track, no whiter, lighter is
Than his brave heart; the body's burden seems
Now but new consecration to have found.
True! "Nevermore the man he was"—For his
A soul regained that has made good its dreams.

"GONE WEST"

Of many a comrade must they say "Gone West"
Upon the sunset trail to the world's rim
Where rays refulgent leap to welcome him
And usher him to his eternal rest,
Enrobed in splendor. Ended is the quest
For earthly joy; from out the battle grim
The ransomed spirit soars, the vision dim
Becomes "the vision glorious", utmost, best.
When the bright beams of heavenly morning gild
The ampler sky, with power divine shall blend
The fire long hidden in the earthly clod
Whose gift of life not wasted but fulfilled
In pure desire pursuing beauty's trend
Attains at last the endless ends of God.

WAR CHRISTMAS

O happy ye whom hearth and home invite
To Christmas joys afar from scenes of war
Where many thousand helpless wanderers are
Banished from home, bereft of all delight
With scanty shelter or in cruel plight
Of cold and hunger, robbed of all their store.
Yet blest are they, the Lord whom ye adore
Sounded of the world's woe the depth and height.
Homeless the Christchild came, and homeless plied
His ministry of love, till lifted high
He drew the hearts of men to their eternal goal
And down the ages moves His friend's beside,
Swifter than mother at her infant's cry
His loving arms enfold the fainting soul.

THE PASSING OF THE BELLS

Mourn for the bells, the passing of the bells
The bells condemned a double death to die
And, dying and death dealing—must deny
Their origin benign. No sadder knells
For their forgotten faith than silence tells
In the forsaken belfries. Passers by
To their hearts' yearning hear no chimes reply
No longer with the breeze the music swells.
Gone the great masters' thoughts engraved, and gone
The solemn organ pipes in stately row
All molten in the furnace of fell war
To sate a tyrant's frenzy for renown
Dread sacrifice! The bells perforce must go
For music's soul belongs where freemen are.

WAR MUSIC

Oft on the brink of battle from the whirr
Of warlike sounds, emerges, swells and fills
The air fierce martial music that instills
New strength. Its rousing themes recur
To blare of brass and tube, or blur
Of droning pipes as the bold chanter shrills
Defiance to the foe. War music wills
Superbly with an aim that cannot err.
When on the forward march the troopers go
The pungent sweetness of the fifes, and throb
Of the persistent drum keep nerves athrill
And pulses marking time to eager flow
Of ichor in the veins, the while the sob
And sough of guns and shells are never still.

ART AND WAR

Not war itself—black evil at the worst,
Destruction's direst hour—of Art the friend
But the creative forces that attend
The testing time of nations. War accursed,
Steeped in foul wrong by ruthless envy nursed
Yet serves to rally finer powers to expend
Rich latent gifts from sources without end,
Unheard, unseen, unheeded at the first;
That fuller strength to keener insight wed
May bring to birth plans of heroic mould
Momentous aims to shape new destinies;
Out of the very heart of evil, led
By poets, painters, seers, will unfold
Fresh forms of beauty for awaiting eyes.

THE TRAIL OF WAR

O'er blighted lands a scorching wind has passed
And, forest fires' relentless fury spent,
The blackened boles of centuries' growth lament
Like mutes funereal. Grim and gaunt they cast
Their spectral shadows, shame the sunshine, blast
With presages of death returning life (now bent
On reparation). Their first beauty, meant
For benediction, doomed were they to outlast.
So passes war's foul breath and so remain
The ghastly ruins of men's hopes and dreams
Built in stone, wrought into roof and spire.
Tapestried hall or matchless window pane;
Of perfect workmanship, their remnant seems
To urge renewal while it mocks desire.

BROKEN LIVES

Who that has followed up a single strand
In fate's perplexing coil could try to gauge
The cruel windings of war's heritage
Of woe worked out in every land
In wounds, in nervous wreckage, life work planned
Diverged into strange ways and life a pilgrimage
Dreary and sad beyond all hope to assuage
But by the Man of Sorrows' healing hand.
Of broken bodies, broken lives no art
But His can blend the precious fragments till
They hold more sweetness and more beauty than
Th' unbroken forms could ever know—their part
To show true values and true valor—fill
A privileged place in God's unfolding plan.

WHEN STRIKES THE HOUR

Not with great shout of triumph may the hour
That strikes for Liberty be hailed. It e'en
Might be—on fields so vast—unheard, unseen,
The solemn stroke, the hand that points when power
Has weighed the balance true, when blackest lower
Clouds of defeat o'er foes whose hopes would lean
To victory long after they had been
The destined prey their own dark deeds devour.
Yet were the moment marked, so great the cause,
So great the cost; the boldest heart would feel
Not pride but awe; nor weak elation mar
The sacred sense of duty, nor the applause
Of a world watching the event should steal
The strength retrieved from waging righteous
war.

THE COMING PEACE

Soon, at a word, the roar of guns may cease
Or, muttering like a summer storm subside
With fitful flashes as in unspent pride
Of power whose ebbing forces find release.
The furtive smoke wreaths' torn and scattered fleece
From a fierce flock that long the field defied
Denote the fight is near its end, descried
In the near future is the coming peace.
O hope sublime that in that happy hour
Mankind in the searchlight of God may see
A chance supreme to shape a common wealth
From a world's elements in flux; devour
No more each others substance; each land, free,
A guarantee of peace within itself.

THE ONLY CONQUEST

The only conquest worthy of the name.
The consecration of all powers that be
To great fulfillment. Opportunity
Is theirs to conquer that which led to shame
In their past history; rid the rolls of blame,
Strike at the root of all the ills—the baneful tree
Of false ambition and temerity—
This were true courage; this enduring fame.
The inner deep compulsion of their faith
Constrains the victors while the vanquished well
May know, thro' shattered hopes, profound relief
From wild obsession struggling toward a wraith
Of world-dominion. Lying dead, its knell
May prove of a whole people's gains the chief.

THE TASK OF THE ELDERS

From earth made holy by love's offering
Of utmost life for lives now left behind
And greater life to come, to us assigned
The task to guard the blossoming
Of precious seed for future harvest, bring
To pass the purpose pure by youth divined
When making the great venture, pay in kind
Their precious gift—tho' we go sorrowing.
Immortal bloom is theirs and sweet perfume
Of their most lovely deeds lingers in air
To bless the aftergrowth that so may we—
Who could not take their place, nor fill their room
Ere we, too, pass—the sacred soil prepare
For fuller fruits of Love and Liberty.

THE FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE

Shall we whose stake in the world's future placed
On war's most awful hazard, has been swept
Into the golden treasury for God's uses kept
Hold back from risk, by prejudice encased
Or timorous dread of overleaping haste
Hoarding and cherishing but blind, inept
At wiping out the stains that long have crept
Over earth's coinage and the divine effaced?
Rather may we with splendid rashness throw
Our fullest weight into the balance; spend
The residue of life in new delight
Of righting ancient wrongs; an added glow
Of joy, and faith clear-eyed shall lend
Courage and skill for this supremest fight.

WHAT LIBERTY DEMANDS

Christ came, and lo! the rigor of the law
Led by the Spirit left its heavy load
But took a loftier flight, a harder road.
Each new-born soul a purer vision saw,
A perfect plan, a mark without a flaw
And joyously obeyed the higher code
Free from the penal gyves, the irksome goad
That pressed men forward, urged, but could not draw.
O larger Liberty! supremely dear
Whose rule of life is Love. Thy nobler needs
And larger faith, and powers in fuller play
Call us to arduous struggle, worthier deeds
To greet the coming dawn; our only fear
To mar the glory of the newer day.

THE BEAUTY OF CHANGE

With joy may we acclaim a world of change
And of time tested custom only cling
To proven Truth whose message hallowing
All of the past that future use can range
Upon the side of progress still proclaims
The changeless in the changing, still can sing
Th' immortal melodies that urgent ring
Would men but hear and heed, nor deem them
strange.
Each cadence mournful or triumphal tends
Toward ever-richening music. Never cease
Th' inspiring themes to vary and to grow:
Vast and mysterious the deeper life that lends
Itself to change, may find and will release
New forces nobler than as yet we know.

LOVE CALLS THE TUNE

Silent, unstrung like instruments disused
That long had lain unmindful of their power
Our languid spirits seemed to shrink and cower
And, self-distrustful, fain had we refused
The painful tension of strings long abused
By rust and slackness, till the crucial hour
Compelled a strain—tho' harsh it seemed and
dour—
To rend our hearts, of cowardice accused.
Who dare distrust their aptitude when Love
With master hand once sets the strings in place
And with the poignant pressure of the bow
Draws from unmeasured depths, and heights above
A measured magic and a saving grace
That mute submission never could bestow.

THE SECOND CHANCE

Think when red flame of fancy fired us all
In early youth; in its bright glow to bask
The righting of a world's wrongs seemed a task
Too easy for us till th' opposing wall
Of fact at our fierce challenge failed to fall.
Romantic valor but a gallant mask
In many a case did prove. Time well might ask
Of us: "Who answers to that first roll-call?"
Let "Present" be our cry to the old claim,
Let us win back the splendor of the gleam
More true and tender thro' translucent tears;
While yet our eyes have light desire's white flame
May blend the glamour of the earlier dream
With "many colored wisdom" of the years.

THE GLORY OF THE CLIMB

The glory of the start when from the play
Of light and shadow on life's plain the soul
Is lured to scale the heights and leave the whole
Possessed for good unknown, prepares the way
For grander glory of the climb whose joys repay
The pain of ceaseless striving, frequent dole
Of sorrow ere we yet can reach the goal,
The wide horizons of a greater day.
Yet tho' our footsteps reach earth's highest peak
Then slow descend into the length'n'g shades
Where gentle mists round rocky gorges cling,
The soul climbs on fulfilment far to seek
With faith unailing as earth's beauty fades
Still mounting surely on untiring wing.

FINITE TO INFINITE

If ease were all and smooth perfection gained
How dull the days, how languidly would beat
Pulses unquicken'd by the generous heat
Of power-compelling ardor, effort trained
To find a pathway yet unknown, unplanned
In native rock or forest. Incomplete,
The task more vital is, more great the feat
In progress than when purpose is attained.
Who "finis" writes his work tho' passing fair
Has found its limit. Fain he starts to build
Anew nor stays to sate exultant sight
With that which is attainable, aware
That the creative longing unfulfilled
Propells the finite toward the Infinite.

HEAVEN'S KINGDOM HERE AND NOW

As Christ fulfilled the hopes of holy men
Of olden time, seekers and seers of Truth,
So He foretold with grave and prescient ruth
The gradual process ere with clearer ken
The sons of men as sons of God should then
Thro' sacrifice, thro' selfless love and sooth
O'ercoming evil, spurning creeds uncouth
To His most tender teaching come again—
Heaven's Kingdom here and now; a faith afire
With potent force perpetually renewed;
Of Truth a tireless love; unresting, still, at rest;
Passion of pity; burning zeal to inspire
A like love in all others—Thus embued
With quenchless hope should Christians stand
confessed.

THE CONQUERING CHRIST

What need we fear, tho' outer veils be rent,
If but Christ's inner meaning stand revealed;
Pellucid Truth, patent and unconcealed,
Of such His words on earth—by sophists bent
Past all believing. The long years have lent
More salience to their worth, His sayings wield
A sword of proof, His promises a shield
In which time finds no flaw, contrives no dent.
Let all that can be riven freely go;
Dogmas and doles, and vestiges of things
Outlived, that over-clinging souls enticed.
On solid rock erect each soul may know
Th' outpouring of the Spirit when it brings
Christ lovers nearer to the heart of Christ.

THE MORE ABUNDANT LIFE

Ah! Why should God's good world deprived be
Of fullest working power; of each soul's best;
Each passion consecrate, each gift possessed
In trust for service of the many? He
Who tastes of such supreme felicity
Leaves penury behind; new joy, new zest,
Initiative and buoyant strength attest
Spirit and form in perfect symmetry.
Christ's call to more abundant life obeyed
The mighty movements of the universe
Are one with man's soul on its onward way;
Be it thro' din of battle, undismayed,
Or, greatly living, when war clouds disperse
In peace that holds no danger of decay.

DIVERSITY

As every land a charm unique purveys
And genius of each race its gift bestows
To vary the world's beauty and dispose
The heart of man to kindliness and praise;
What passion of renown in noble ways
Might kindle keen desire to achieve, that goes
Far straighter to its aim: nor, wasteful, grows
Ever more grudging with the fretful days.
The elm tree measures not itself with oak.
Nor on the stately uplands pine with pine,
Each has its own superb uplift, yet yields
In grandeur to the forest. Palms evoke
An equal love with orchard and with vine
And share the dews of heaven with daisied fields.

UNITY

The call to live or die for freedom, heard,
Brought unity of effort full in play
In splendid sum of energy that may
As stimulus remain, th' inspiring word
By which a waiting world, now deeply stirred,
May grasp and seize before it fall away
A vast potential power; and will to stay
Concerted action, bold and undeterred.
Yet has no individual gift been lost;
Rather each personality has gained
An added lustre in a setting new—
As, linked together, famous climbers crossed
The highest Alps; so brilliant minds attained
In Unity their loftiest point of view.

THE UNSILENCED SONG

Dare we not feel in these heroic times
Like eager mariners upon the brink
Of unplumbed oceans where men learn to think
In terms of worlds to be discovered, climes
Where bracing air alone is breathed, where chimes
With ring of truth Reason with Faith, and sink
Into oblivion deadly doubts that shrink
From trusting in the deathlessly divine.
Christ's high command is "Go"—We, one and all,
Thus honored with a share in His design
May fathom deeper, travel farther, prove
By worldwide application the clear call
To set upon a hill His guiding light
And keep unsilenced the great song of Love.