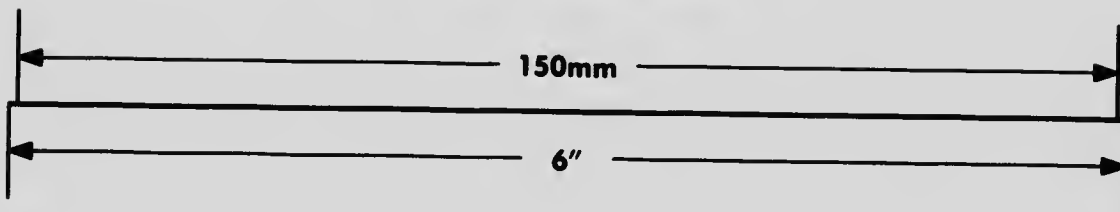
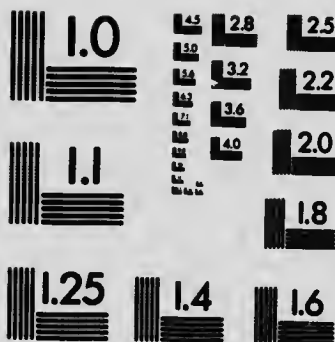
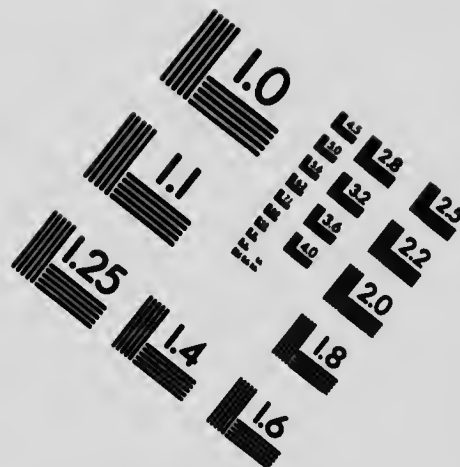
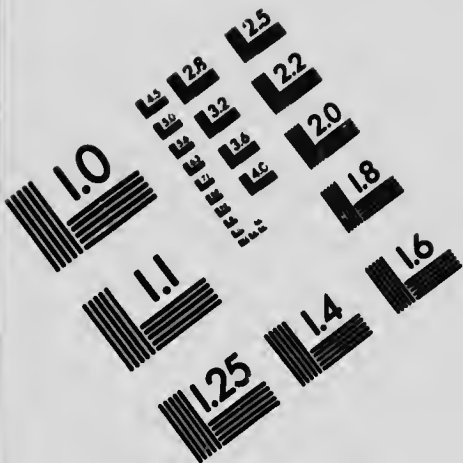


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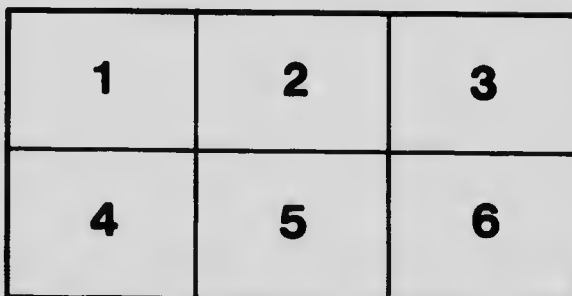
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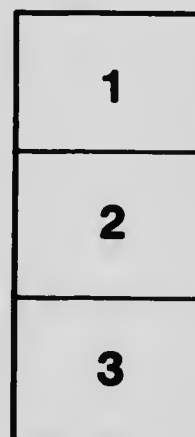
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THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

141

**Petals from the Flower of Song**

by

**Herbert E. Collins**

with

**Foreword**

by

**Edward Morrison, B. A.**

**Cover Design and Frontispiece**

by

**Grace Paterson**

P21-10

68954

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## FOREWORD

---



It is after some days of misgiving in regard to the wisdom of the venture, that Mr. Collins has been induced to collect into a small volume his lyrics, which have brought so much delight to his friends during the past few years.

“Such songs have power to quiet  
The restless pulse of care,  
And come like the benediction  
That follows after prayer.”

After all, the real root of all poetry is in the human heart. The mind is cold and critical. It plans and plots; it examines and sifts. Man with the mind alone is but a mean creature. It is man the hoper, man the dreamer, the eternal child of delight and despair, who is the hero of nature and the darling of the ages. Because of this, true poetry will always be to him a language speaking to him from the highest levels of his being, and a translation from a divine tongue emanating from the mystery and will of God.

The author brings this little book of verse as a votive



## FOREWORD

offering into the Temple of Friendship. He trusts that all will read it, not with the keenest glasses in the world, but read it leniently, and forgive all its trespasses.

“For if of these fallen petals  
One to you seem fair,  
Love will waft till it settles  
On your hair.

And when wind and winter harden  
All the loveless land,  
It will whisper of the garden,  
You will understand.”

Hamilton, Ont.,  
Sept. 20th, 1916

Edward Morrison

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**Dedicated**

**to**

**My Sister**

## To My Readers

The message of the violets  
Comes not more deeply true  
Than these few tender thoughts of love  
Go from my heart to you.

## DEDICATION

---

To those who are leaving this School to enter the larger  
School of Life.

(Written for the Graduates of the Hamilton Collegiate of  
the Spring of 1914.)

You who leave these halls of learning  
After some few years of strife,  
To assume the sterner duties  
In the larger School of Life;

Who are standing on the threshold,  
May I speak a word to you,  
That will help you fight the battle,  
Give you courage, see you through.

There's a maxim old and trusted  
You should ever bear in mind—  
Sow a thought and reap an action,  
Sow an act and you will find

That a habit you've created,  
Which you'd better watch with care;  
Sow the habit—though so gently—  
There's the character you bear:

## DEDICATION

Sow the character, and as surely  
As the gray dawn follows night,  
You will reap in time your destiny,—  
Be sure you have it right.

Let Endeavour be your watchword,  
And let Honour be your guide,  
Trust her, she will lead you safely,  
You'll have nought to fear beside.

Let Ambition—worthy motive—  
Serve you only in the good  
It may help you do to others,  
Work for self has never stood.

Let your aim be high as heaven,  
Mind not if you miss your goal;  
Though you fail 'mid honest striving  
This be yours—a noble soul.

## AT THE FRONT

---

On a foreign shore, 'neath an alien sky, our brave boys  
nobly stand,  
Shoulder to shoulder, arm to arm, with rifle and with  
brand;  
Onward they march to meet the foe, so dauntless and  
so brave,  
Onward—many to victory, but some—some to the grave.

The Englishmen, the Scotchmen, the Irishmen are there,  
Brave Hindus and Australians, too, are bound to do their  
share;  
But the loyal lads from Canada are equal to them all,  
And they'll show them that Canadians, too, are not afraid  
to fall.

The Lion is aroused and her cubs have gone along  
To assist her in the overthrow of tyranny and wrong;  
To lay the vile oppressor low, and break his power of  
might,  
And establish firm and steadfast there the principles of  
right.

## AT THE FRONT

Though bullets whizz around their heads, our boys will  
never flinch,

Though bayonets and sabres gleam, they will not yield an  
inch;

They'll march and fight through blinding rain or 'neath  
the blazing sun,

And they'll keep it up, too, mind you, until our cause is won.

And often in the evening, when the camp-fire smoulders  
low,

And the struggling moon gleams fitfully on the snow-white  
tents below,

Then the tired and wounded soldier, in the token from his  
breast,

Sees visions of home so far away, and mother, and—the  
rest.



## THE PASSING OF MYTHOLOGY

---

"There is something sad in the extinction of a really fine mythology. Together with much worthless superstition, a certain element of poetry is thereby taken from the world, never to be replaced."—John L. Stoddard.

The gods have left Olympus high,  
The gods our fathers knew,  
The realms where fairies used to dwell  
Are disenchanted, too.

Our lives are bare without them all,  
We lose them with regret;  
Our world is now too workaday,  
We read them—then forget.

The Nymphs are driven from the streams,  
The Dryads from the trees,  
On mountain sides no Oreads dwell,  
Nor Neptune in the seas.

The sun is robb'd of Phoebus, too,  
No more a god he seems;  
Fierce Odin and Valhalla's halls  
Are fainter than our dreams.

## THE PASSING OF MYTHOLOGY

No more through air, o'er battle's din,  
The fair Valkyries ride;  
No more sits Jupiter in heaven  
With Juno by his side.

The moon was fair Diana once,  
Now just the cold, white moon;  
The winds are dead since Aeolus  
Has left them—all too soon.

The souls, that leave earth now, pass o'er  
Without old Charon's aid;  
The gods might still their nectar sip  
If Ganymede had stay'd.

Sad, is it not, that these must pass  
And never come again?  
The world is poorer by their loss:  
Why could they not remain?

They've left a void within our midst,  
Their voices now are still'd;  
The place they held in lives of old  
Can never be refill'd.

# WE WERE ALWAYS OLD CHUMS, MOTHER DEAR

---

## A Song.

### I.

An aged man was sitting by the firelight's evening glow,  
Thinking of the days beyond recall;  
As he gazed into the embers, 'mid the scenes of long ago,  
His fancy saw his sainted mother's face.  
She looked as sweet and fair as when she left him,  
And his heart with inexpressive love yearned,  
For long years had passed since they'd been chums to-  
gether.

And he murmured, as his cheeks the teardrops burned:

### Chorus—

“We were always old chums, Mother dear,  
And I never was sad with you near me;  
So again when we meet, will my joy be complete,  
For we'll still be old chums, Mother dear.”

## WE WERE ALWAYS OLD CHUMS, MOTHER DEAR

### II.

He lived again in fancy all those well-remembered days,  
Seated by his loving mother's knee;  
As he looked into her fond eyes with his honest, boyish  
gaze

He thought that they could never parted be,  
For they had always been such chums together,  
And their lives were bound together heart to heart;  
And he'd say: "I could not live without you, Mother,  
If the time should come when we would have to part,

#### Chorus—

For we're always old chums, Mother dear,  
And my heart's always glad when you're near me.  
My joy is complete while I sit at your feet,  
For we're always old chums, Mother dear."

## TO MY BELOVED

---

Oh bright is yon evening star, Dear,  
The brightest in all the sky,  
But brighter far than any star  
Is the twinkle in your eye.

The rippling rill runs laughing along,  
And the sunshine laughs all day,  
But sunshine or rill a thousand times, still  
You are merrier far than they.

The dew in the chalice of lily fair,  
The nectar that Venus sips,—  
Oh the gods and the bee may envy me  
The sweetness of your sweet lips.

The zephyr of Summer may gently caress  
The leaf, or the flower, or vine,  
But no fairy's wand e'er so soft as your hand  
As it lovingly rests in mine.

Day fades and the deepening twilight falls  
Like the tender breath of a sigh,  
But more tender and deep than the twilight's sleep  
Is the love-light in your eye.

## MERCIE

(Aged Four.)

---

There's a Fairy dwells in our home, and I wish that you  
could see  
Just how much this little Fairy means in this old world  
to me;  
She plays upon my heart-strings with the touch of a mas-  
ter hand,  
And there comes most wondrous music only love can  
understand.

And often when I'm weary at the closing of the day,  
As I sit there in the gloaming by the firelight's flickering  
ray,  
Then she'll steal up, Oh! so softly, and she'll climb upon  
my knee,  
And the touch of her fairy fingers makes this earth a  
heaven to me.

Then she'll say, "Now tell a story." And again a tale is  
told  
Of fairies, and of witches, and of bears, and robbers bold.  
Of the world and all it's sorrows very little do I reckon  
With her soft cheek pressing mine, and her arms about my  
neck.

Her childish prattle thrills my heart throughout the live-  
long day,  
And I love her merry laughter as I watch her at her play.  
You haven't one in your home? Then I'm sure as I can be,  
That, because of this one Fairy, you wish that you were me.

## TO HELEN

---

Helen of the hazel eyes,  
Laughing as the summer skies,

Ready, aye, for any fun,  
Play or ramble, swim or run;

Ever busy as a bee,  
Never sitting idle, she,

Watch, see how her needles go,—  
Three score pairs of socks, you know;

Says that they will be a treat  
For the soldiers' weary feet.

Quite at home most anywhere,  
Kitchen, parlour, camping-chair.

Winsome, witching, wondrous wise,  
Helen of the hazel eyes.

## CHILDHOOD

---

Come with me and let us wander to the golden days of  
childhood,

Wander back along the dimly-stretching avenues of time,  
For I fain would be a boy again, so careless, free and happy,  
And with all a boy's ambitions, all his plans and hopes  
sublime.

Once again I see the old home with its orchard and its  
meadows,

Never have been blossoms sweeter, never sky so clear  
above,

Every nook and every cranny made a thousand times the  
dearer

By the gleam and consecration of a wondrous mother-  
love.

Oft I lay upon the hearth rug on the stormy winter  
evenings,

And with vision fix'd, enraptured, read loved volumes  
through and through

In the dim, uncertain glimmer of the fitful beech log  
burning,

As it sparkled and it crackled and went roaring up the  
flue.



## CHILDHOOD

I was one with Robin Crusoe in his trials and his triumphs,  
Ali Baba and his Forty Thieves were good enough  
for me,

I journeyed far with Christian, step by step I trod beside  
him,

And I supp'd with merry Robin Hood beneath the green-  
wood tree.

Oh, the dream is all so real, and I know the vision's  
splendid,

Now, as ever, vain illusion, far-off fields look green and  
bright;

But when I scan the sorrows of the wide years intervening,  
I wish I were a boy again—but only for tonight.

## THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

---

Flakes of downy whiteness  
Sifting through the air,  
Merry ring of sleighbells  
Tinkling everywhere;  
Ruddy squares of brightness  
Gleaming through the night,  
Happy hearts of children  
Round the hearthstone bright;  
Eager faces glisten,  
Anxious voices hum:—  
“Will old Santa fail us?”  
“Do you think he’ll come?”  
Later, as the evening  
Deepens into night,  
Mother earth is sleeping,  
Coverlet of white;  
Watchful eyes grown weary,  
Restless little heads  
Dreaming of their stockings  
In their little beds.  
You and I once more, Dear,  
Filling heel and toe,  
As they did for us, Dear,  
Many years ago.  
Christmas is the happiest time,  
Always will be, too,  
While the God of Christmas  
Leaves me them and you.

**THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS.  
KINDNESS AND LOVE**

---

When the church bells usher in Christmas Day  
The wind may be bitter, the skies be gray,  
And there may be many that are in need:  
But someone can brighten their sky; indeed  
They will not feel the biting wind,  
If only somebody will be kind.

When the morning star fades on Christmas morn  
There may be envy, and hate, and scorn;  
And these will darken the Christmas cheer:  
But open your hearts, and, never fear,  
They will vanish like ghosts, for they cannot stay  
If love dwells within on Christmas Day.

## NATURE'S TEMPLE

---

Behold yon shadowy grove, a temple fair,  
Cathedral old, with richest tapestries  
Of woven green from Nature's magic loom;  
Whose long-drawn aisles invite the worshipper  
Amid their tender twilight to commune  
There with the Infinite; whose pillar'd pines  
Majestic columns, stately and severe,  
Uphold the glorious dome of heaven;  
Whose incense is the perfume of the pines  
From breathing censer swung by unseen hands;  
Whose solemn, warbled anthems, from soft throats  
Of hidden, feather'd songsters, gently steal  
Upon the silence, like the breath of prayer;  
Whose altar is the green and mossy knoll  
With delicately-flowered drapery,  
And many a tinted chalice, from whose rim  
The wine of priestly service oft is sipp'd;  
And in the corridors a holy hush  
And dim religious light pervading all.

O heart, o'ercharged with grief, bowed down by woe,  
What blessed peace to find in this retreat  
Of leafy nooks and sylvan solitudes,  
A sanctuary in the forest dim,  
Far, far removed from envy, care and strife!  
Leave all, dear heart, flee from the haunts of men,  
Where jealous greed each nobler passion kills,  
Seek refuge in yon fane not made by hands,  
And peace, O God, what peace discover there.

## THE RESURRECTION OF LIFE

---

When I see the lilacs blooming in the merry month of  
Spring,  
When I scent the locust-perfume and I hear the bluebirds  
sing,  
When I see the bright-eyed daisies sprinkled o'er the  
meadow vale,  
And the showers of snow-white blossoms sifting through  
the evening gale,  
When I see the golden jonquils to each other nod and nod,  
And the dainty purple violets nestling in the emerald sod,  
To my heart is borne this fancy, old as time, yet ever new,  
Life is once more resurrected, and it **lives** for me and you.

## MY CANARY

---

Sweet little songster, warbler fair,  
Vestal virgin, thou, of song,  
The joy of every morning, yea,  
And through the whole day long.

O rapturous minstrel, blithe and gay,  
When I hear thy notes divine  
All my being thrills with ecstasy  
As the heart is stirred with wine.

Thy slender pinions ne'er were tried,  
A prisoner all thy days,  
Yet pour'st thy floods of melody  
In uncomplaining lays.

What is the burden of thy song?  
Glad thoughts of far-off things?  
No, from thy prison's barren past  
No recollection springs.

Hast ever known the fond delights  
Or forest, hill and stream?  
To thee all nature has been, is,  
And must remain a dream.

Then what impels the gladsome strains  
That from thy bosom start?  
It is the secret, mystic power  
Of love within thy heart.

## THE SEA-GULL

---

Blest emblem of happiness, bird of the sea,  
Thrice blessed one, bird of the air,  
The gleam of your flight draws my envious heart,  
And it's Oh to soar with you up there!

As light as June clouds in the glow of the west,  
As wanton as waves on the strand,  
As free as the bloom-scented zephyr of Spring,—  
Yet in fancy you're mine to command.

With graceful and steady and languorous sweep  
You glide on your pinions fair  
Far, far through the infinite sun-kissed blue  
To the heart of the sunset rare.

And there do you glean what no earthling may know  
Of the clouds and the sky and the sea,  
You bring back rich tales from the Land of My Dreams,  
And you whisper them only to me.

## THE SEA-GULL

Oh then you may ride with the wild waves at play,  
And sport with the Nereids there,  
Or watch the fair Mermaidens sitting below  
Acombing their golden hair.

You may soar to such heights as you will, and be one  
With the sun and the moon and the stars,  
You may wing your swift flight where the rose-color'd dawn  
Softly creeps through the Orient bars.

On wondrous bird, blest spirit of light,  
I would fain keep you near, for it seems  
That my spirit through you lives the life of the sky,  
The life of the Land of My Dreams.



## FALLEN LEAVES

---

Fallen leaves that wither'd lie  
'Neath the tender Autumn sky,  
Everywhere, through field and town,  
Ragged, jagged, golden, brown,  
Blown about in many a swirl  
By October's gusty whirl;  
We may deem you useless, dead,  
Scurrying in the rabbit's tread,  
In the lynx's lonely lair,  
Or the forest, bleak and bare,  
But, a covering soft and warm,  
You are shielding earth from harm,  
When the Storm King's chill embrace  
Blasts each fairy wood and place;  
Nature's kind protector, you,  
Till soft April's breath shall woo  
Leaf and bud and everything  
With the gentlest kiss of Spring.  
Yours a part, since time began,  
In the great Eternal Plan.  
Fallen leaves that wither'd lie,  
You shall triumph by and by.

## NIGHT

---

The day is done; the sun's last rays are streaming  
    Across the sky;  
On forest, lake, and distant hilltop gleaming,  
    And cloudlets high.

The night is come, and stars are shining brightly,  
    Their vigils keep;  
The crickets sing, the dews are falling lightly  
    Throug'. darkness deep.

Diana now has drawn within her bower,  
    Fair Queen of Even;  
Sweet sleep steals o'er each tree and every flower,  
    Earth's boon from heaven.

## RECOMPENSE

---

When the shadows of life's fleeting day fall eastward,  
And the hush of evening steals upon the world,  
    When through the twilight deep  
    Comes the call to rest and sleep,  
And life's sun is set and every breeze is furl'd;  
  
After toiling in the scorching heat of noontide,  
Often fainting 'neath the heavy, heavy load,  
    When with hearts unstain'd by sin,  
    We've the harvest garner'd in,  
And we reach at last the ending of the road;  
  
Then may each of us be found in calm contentment,  
And with record clear as when our life begun,  
    And may He who waits us there  
    Give us joy beyond compare  
With the gladdest words of welcoming, "Well done!"

## SUNSET IN MUSKOKA

---

The broad, red sun sinks slowly to his rest  
And o'er the heaven sends many a twilight ray  
To tinge each fleecy cloud and wooded crest  
And mark the closing of another day.  
What wonderment, what rapture to behold  
The infinite glories of each roseate hue!  
Though in its day's declining ages old,  
Yet in its varied splendour ever new.  
Oh had I but an artist's touch to paint  
The glad, mad riot of the afterglow,  
Ethereal, translucent, flaming, faint,  
Surpassing far earth's richest, fairest show!  
Such scenes come only from the Master's hand,  
Which all can sense, but none can understand.

## MOONLIGHT IN MUSKOKA

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The sun in splendour bids farewell to day,  
The star of evening ushers in the night,  
The full-orb'd moon in radiance holds sway,  
And earth is steep'd in silentness and light.  
What floods of brightness bathe all things of even,  
Each rock and bay, each bush, and tree, and flower,  
The fairest, rarest gift to earth from heaven  
From set of sun until the dawning hour!  
And Oh! the peace, the calmness of it all,  
The utter silence that around us lies,  
Save for the distant whippoor-will's sad call,  
Or e'en the soaring nighthawk's plaintive cries!  
The while the moon, through infinite spaces whirl'd,  
Keeps tender watch above a slumbering world.



MOONLIGHT IN MUSKOKA

