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Langemarck & Other War Poems

by

WILFRED CAMPBELL

with introduction by

REV. DR. HERRIDGE



The fight goes on, but God demands of all
Heroic patience and heroic trust,
Never to swerve from that first bugle call
Which woke the hero in our patriot dust.



To be sold for
The benefit of the War Workers' Association
of St. Andrew's Church, Ottawa,
and other war work
over Canada

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To my son, Major Basil Campbell,
2nd Canadian Pioneer Battalion, on
the line at the front, and to the many
thousands of other brave Canadians,
who have given of their best manhood
to the Empire and Civilization; to the
memory of our immortal dead; and to
that stern spirit of God like Justice,
which demands that this fight be fought
to a finish; or else our dead will have
died in vain: This booklet is solemnly
dedicated.

In this little book are brought together a few war-poems of Dr. Wilfred Campbell, our foremost Canadian singer. They have received enthusiastic praise from the highest literary critics on both sides of the sea; and, quite apart from their poetic merit, a noble patriotism breathes through them.

Dr. Campbell has kindly consented to their publication in this form, and the entire proceeds of their sale will be devoted to the relief of wounded Canadian soldiers. I have no doubt that the desire to aid in this work, and at the same time to become possessed of literature worth having, will insure their wide distribution.

W. T. HERRIDGE.

St. Andrew's Manse,
Ottawa

The Ballad "Langemarck" which gives the title to this booklet depicts the most heroic incident in Canadian history where the first Canadian Division held the line against fearful odds, when the deadly German gas was used for the first time in modern warfare. The poem is re-printed from "Poems of the Great War," edited by Professor Cunliffe, for the Belgian Relief Fund; Selected Poems of the War, 1915-16, by Professor Clarke, and the latest volume of "The Library of the World's Best Literature."

THE AVENGING ANGEL

[To Flight-Lieutenant Robinson and all the
heroic aviators of the Royal Flying Corps.]

WHEN the last faint red of the day is dead,
And the dim, far heaven is lit
With the silvern cars
Of the orient stars,
And the winged winds whimper and flit;

Then I rise through the dome of my aerodrome,
Like a giant eagle in flight;
And I take my place
In the vengeful race
With the sinister fleets of night.

As I rise and rise in the cloudy skies,
No sound in the silence is heard,
Save the lonesome whirr
Of my engine's purr,
Like the wings of a monster bird.

And naught is seen save the vault, serene,
Of the vasty realms of night,
That vanish, aloof
To eternity's roof,
As I mount in my ominous flight.

And I float and pause in the fleecy gauze,
Like a bird in a nest of down;
While 'neath me in deeps
Of blackness, sleeps
The far, vast London town.

But I am not here, like a silvern sphere,
To glory the deeps of space,
But a sentinel, I,
In this tower of the sky,
Scanning the dim deep's face.

For, sudden, afar, like a luminous star,
Or a golden horn of the moon,
Or a yellow leaf
Of the forest's grief,
When the Autumn winds are atune;

There is borne on my sight, down the spaces of night,
By the engines of evilment sped,
That wonderful, rare,
Vast ship of the air,
Beautiful, ominous, dread.

One instant she floats, most magic of boats,
Illusive, implacable, there;
Throned angel of ill,
On her crystal-built hill,
O'er a people's defenceless despair.

Then sudden, I rise, like a bolt through the skies,
To the very dim roofs of the world;
Till down in the gray,
I see my grim prey,
Like a pallid gold leaf, upcurled.

And I hover and swing, until swiftly I spring,
And drop like a falling star;
And again and again,
My death-dealing rain,
Hurl to the deeps afar.

Then I hover and listen, till I see the far glisten
Of a flame-flash blanching the night;
And I know that my hate,
That has lain in wait,
Has won in the grim air-fight.

Then I curve and slant, while my engines pant,
And the wings of my great bird tame;
While the sinister Hun,
In his ill, undone,
Goes out in a blinding flame.

THE FIGHT GOES ON

THE fight goes on; though slower than men thought;
But still it goes; and Britain works her way,
With her great-hearted allies; unsullied, unbought;
Toward that true dawn which ushers freedom's
day.

The fight goes on; but God demands of all,
Heroic patience and heroic trust,
Never to swerve from that first bugle call,
Which woke the hero in our patriot dust.

The fight goes on; though oft in darker hours,
Faint hearts would compromise with freedom's
foe;
But unto such, though traitor cowardice cowers,
Each blooddrop of our slain ones answers, No!

In this grim strife, where Crime and Judgment meet,
And earth's great flags for freedom's cause
unfurled;
Better go under in some dread defeat,
Than compromise with what would crush this
world.

LANGEMARCK

(April 26-29, 1915)

THIS is the ballad of Langemarck,
A story of glory and might;
Of the vast Hun horde, and Canada's part
In the great, grim fight.

It was April fair on the Flanders fields,
But the dreadest April then,
That ever the years, in their fateful flight,
Had brought to this world of men.

North and east, a monster wall,
The mighty Hun ranks lay,
With fort on fort, and iron-ringed trench,
Menacing, grim and gray.

And south and west, like a serpent of fire,
Serried the British lines,
And in between, the dying and dead,
And the stench of blood, and the trampled mud,
On the fair, sweet Belgian vines.

And far to the eastward, harnessed and taut,
Like a scimitar, shining and keen,
Gleaming out of that ominous gloom,
Old France's hosts were seen.

When out of the grim Hun lines one night,
There rolled a sinister smoke;—
A strange, weird cloud, like a pale, green shroud,
And death lurked in its cloak.

On a fiend-like wind it curled along
 Over the brave French ranks,
Like a monster tree its vapors spread,
 In hideous, burning banks
Of poisonous fumes that scorched the night
 With their sulphurous demon danks.

And men went mad with horror, and fled
 From that terrible strangling death,
That seemed to sear both body and soul
 With its baleful, flaming breath.

Till even the little dark men of the south,
 Who feared neither God nor man,
Those fierce, wild fighters of Afric's steppes,
 Broke their battalions and ran—

Ran as they never had run before,
 Gasping, and fainting for breath;
For they knew 'twas no human foe that slew;
 And that hideous smoke meant death.

Then red in the reek of that evil cloud,
 The Hun swept over the plain;
And the murderer's dirk did its monster work,
 Mid the scythe-like shrapnel rain.

Till it seemed that at last, the brute Hun hordes,
 Had broken that wall of steel;
And that soon, through this breach in the freeman's
 dyke,
Their trampling hosts would wheel;—

And sweep to the south in ravaging might,
And Europe's peoples again,
Be trodden under the tyrant's heel,
Like herds, in the Teuton pen.

But in that line on the British right,
There massed a corps amain,
Of men who hailed from a far west land
Of mountain and forest and plain;

Men new to war and its dreadest deeds,
But noble and staunch and true;
Men of the open, East and West,
Brew of old Britain's brew.

These were the men out there that night,
When Hell loomed close ahead;
Who saw that pitiful, hideous rout,
And breathed those gases dread;
While some went under and some went mad;
But never a man there fled.

For the word was "Canada," theirs to fight,
And keep on fighting still—
Britain said, "Fight," and fight they would,
Though the Devil himself in sulphurous mood,
Came over that hideous hill.

Yea, stubborn, they stood, that hero band,
Where no soul hoped to live;
For five, 'gainst eighty, thousand men,
Were hopeless odds to give.

Yea, fought they on! 'Twas Friday eve,
When that demon gas drove down;
'Twas Saturday eve that saw them still
Grimly holding their own;

Sunday, Monday, saw them yet,
A steadily lessening band,
With "no surrender" in their hearts,
But the dream of a far-off land,

Where mother and sister and love would weep
For the hushed heart lying still;—
But never a thought but to do their part,
And work the Empire's will.


Ringed round, hemmed in, and back to back,
They fought there under the dark,
And won for Empire, God and Right,
At grim, red Langemarck.

Wonderful battles have shaken this world,
Since the Dawn-God overthrew Dis;
Wonderful struggles of right against wrong,
Sung in the rhymes of the world's great song,
But never a greater than this.

Bannockburn, Inkerman, Balaclava,
Marathon's god-like stand;
But never a more heroic deed,
And never a greater warrior breed,
In any warman's land.

This is the ballad of Langemarck,
A story of glory and might;
Of the vast Hun horde, and Canada's part
In the great, grim fight.

OUR DEAD

 UR dead, they are ours and the Empire's
Till the last red sun doth set—
And may God, in His terrible justice, deal with us,
If we forget.

Till that which we sent them to die for,
Till that dread struggle be won;
Though the traitor and idiot cry out for peace,
There can be none.

We are either on God's side or evil's,
We are either perjured or true—
And that, which we set out to do in the first place,
That must we do.

If we lie now unto our highest,
Prove traitorous unto our best,
And soften the hand, which set out to conquer
At God's behest;

If we fail in our vows in the slightest,
Our pride to dishonour is thrall—
For we stand to win all in this conflict—
Or else lose all.

There are many side-roads to oblivion,
But only one straight to the dawn—
And thrusting aside all paltering, faltering thought,
We must push on.

Not fearing, nor doubting, nor halting,
But iron-souled, centred as one
On the one grim work in this war-gripped world,
Which must be done.

For our dead are ours and the Empire's,
Till the last red sun doth set—
And may God, in His terrible justice. deal with us,
If we forget.

BLOOD DROPS OF HEROES

WHEN the woods at Kilmorie are scarlet and gold,
And the vines are like blood on the wall;
I dream of the faces all pallid and cold,
Of our brave ones who answered the call:
 Like the bright autumn leaves,
 Or the rich, garnered sheaves,
Our truest, our greatest, our all;
For my heart beats in Belgium, or far France's wold,
When the woods at Kilmorie are scarlet and gold.

When the woods at Kilmorie are scarlet and gold,
 I see but the beauty of God,
Not the small ways of men, and the mean faiths they
 Like the blind worm under the clod; [hold,
 But the brave and the true,
 Who knew but to do,
 Like those glorious banners of God,
Arrayed on His hills, or at rest on His mold,
When the woods at Kilmorie are scarlet and gold.

When the woods at Kilmorie are scarlet and gold,
 There's another dread harvest afar;
Where our greatest, our truest ones struggle to hold
 Back the modern world's Juggernaut car;
 And my heart only sees
 In the pageant of trees
 That horrible pageant of war,
Where God's men, for righteousness, strive, as of old—
When the woods at Kilmorie are scarlet and gold.

When the woods at Kilmorie are scarlet and gold,
And the vines are like blood on the wall;
I hear on the winds o'er the wood and the wold,
A bitter, insistent call.
 'Tis the cry of our slain,
 Appealing in vain,
For help where the brave hearts fall;
And its tragic demand doth the whole world hold,
When the woods at Kilmorie are scarlet and gold.

Kilmorie House,
City View, Ottawa.