



By Helen Taylor

The Refugee
And Other Poems

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The Refugee

And Other Poems

By

HELEN TAYLOR



WINNIPEG

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To the welfare of that heroic and gallant
country—Belgium, who, in the face of certain
disaster, refused to sacrifice principle to profit;
this humble offering is dedicated.

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THE REFUGEE

SHE stands, a tragic figure, on the beach,
Gazing with sombre eyes across the sea,
And from her pallid lips, all brokenly,
Her suffering soul finds sad relief in speech.

"They tell me I am safe, that England's shore
Is holy ground the Oppressor dare not tread;
They speak me comfort, bid me lift my head
To meet the day, when I may feel once more

"Beneath my feet the soil of my dear land—
O woeful land! Wherefore should I return
To ope afresh the wounds that sting and burn?
Or pluck, to torture me, one blackened brand.

"From that dear spot where I was wont to greet
A father, husband, son? There came a day
The Prussian eagle swooped upon his prey—
And all my world lay shattered at my feet.

"My little son—(his hair twined goldenly
About his face)—shrieked with his latest breath
'O mother!' And I'll hear that sound, till death,
To search for him and find him, makes me free.

"Once I went down to hell, to give him life,
And who so proud as I when first he pressed
His downy head against my happy breast—
And then to lose him in a madman's strife.

"I am not proud now; rather I must go
Quietly all my days with bated breath,
Lest I disturb the sanctity of death—
God! will the warring nations ever know

"That twice ten thousand miles of richest soil
Won by a battle's godless, insane strife
Has not the worth of one poor human life?
How the fiends chuckle o'er the mad turmoil!"

BELGIUM AND HER KING

BELGIUM, thou land of tragic memories,
Who bearest the scars of centuries of strife,
Once more thy dream of peace is broken through
By foes that seek to crush thy very life.

Once more upon thy meadows monstrous war
Has shaken costly fruit from life's fair tree,
And purple juices dye the trampled fields,
And redden rivers rolling to the sea.

O little Belgium, thou who might'st have bought—
With broken faith for price, an easy peace;
And watched thy harvests ripen, and thy fields
Yield up to thee the kindly year's increase,

Thou couldst not trail thine honor in the dust,
Though Belgium became one yawning grave,
But thou couldst face a strong and cruel foe,
And, saving others, thyself couldst not save.

Out of the prison tomb thy liberty
Shall spring new-born, in radiance and power,
And time, with gentle minist'rings erase
The dreadful scars of this, thy crucial hour.

And thy brave king, words can not paint his worth,
And yet through coming ages while men scan
The pages of earth's history, he will loom
A noble shape, true patriot, and true man.

His kingship was but accident of birth,
His brave soul is his own, and weary men
In trench and leaguered town look on his face
And feel a dauntless spirit theirs again.

For him, for thee, the laurel and the palm,
When from his palsied fingers Thor lets fall
His blood-stained hammer, and the dawn of Peace,
From Right's white shield reflected, shines o'er all.

THE EMPIRE

WHEN shall the star of Britain's might
Wane and be seen no more?
Lost in an ever-dark'ning night,
Reaching from shore to shore,
While the surging waves of the seven seas
Sigh for the fleets they bore.

When shall her proudly flaunting flag
Droop, and for aye be furled?
And, to the dust, a useless rag,
Down from Time's hand be hurled,
Mid the faintly-whispering, faded flags
Lost in the ancient world.

Never! through all the years untold,
While earth revolves through space,
Shall Britain's star grow faint and cold,
Falling from out her place,
For her light is drawn from Eternal Truth,
Sun of the British race.

Never! shall droop her flag. It's **Red**
Speaks brave blood freely given
To keep still **White**, untarnished
Her faith with man and heaven;
And the freedom typed by its ocean **Blue**
Can ne'er from her be riven.

CANADA TO BRITAIN

"Does Britain realize what the consequence will be
of obeying that scrap of paper?"

“ONLY a scrap of paper,” but it bore
The seal of Britain. Therefore it became
A Truth incontrovertible,—a sword
Within the hand of Destiny to lance
The swelling ulcer of a king’s mad greed.

We, whose forefathers drew their earliest breath
Upon those sea-girt isles, are proud to know
Ourselves a part of that great Empire
Which keeps its faith whate’er the consequence,
Which strives with single heart to foster peace,—
If peace may be with honor,—failing that,
Whose slowly-rising, righteous wrath breaks bounds,
And like a torrent irresistible
Sweeps o’er the mighty barriers of the foe,
Strewing their wreckage on the shores of time.

We do not weep, tears are such futile things,
And yet there comes an aching in our throats,
A swelling heart, a hurrying of the breath,
When Britain, from her throne upon the seas,
Musters her sons again to right a wrong,
And wash a foul spot clean with willing blood.
Take of our best. Your cause is righteous cause,
And being righteous, calls for sacrifice.
So, when the Lion bares his glittering teeth
The lion’s whelps spring to his mighty side,
And roar responsive thunder. O’er the din
Of raging battle still we hear the voice
Of Drake, of Nelson, of the Iron Duke
Cheering you on to glorious victory.

And then at last when lust of power is slain
And ravening greed which takes no count of life,
Out of the blood-red mire, God grant we pluck
The snow-white flower of Universal Peace.

THEY KISSED THE FLAG

When it became known, late at night, that the first British expeditionary force had sailed, Belgian men and women in — asked the British consul to show them the British flag. When this was done, they filed past, till early morn, kissing it.—*London Daily Telegraph.*

NIGHT, and the stars of night, afar in their ancient splendor,
Cold and serene look down on earth with its passing turmoils,
So have they gazed unmoved while kingdoms crumbled to ruin,
And, in the halls of kings, the slinking jackal prowling
Finds but the drifting sands, and the black bat's ghostly pinions,
Winds of the sunny south are breathing of purpling grape vines
Drooping at drowsy noon anear to the sea's blue gleaming,
Little those vagrant winds, that flutter the flags uplifted,
Know of the anxious souls who wake through the long night hours,
Dreading the coming day that brings the proud foe still nearer.
Restless they walk the streets and mutter with white lips trembling—
"What will the morrow bring and where is our strength to meet it?
Under their iron heels the feet of the Hun-like foemen
Trample our hapless land, and leave but a smoking shambles.
Where shall we look for aid? Will Britain in just wrath rising
Help us avenge our wrongs, and, striking the pow'r crazed eagle,
Drag from his cruel claws our bleeding and helpless country?
How long! O God, how long! We wait while our hopes grow fainter,
Watching through darkest night for help like a star to beacon."

Suddenly came a thrill: then sounds of a mighty cheering,
Wild huzzahing that broke because of the strangled sobbing.
"Britain has put to sea—her thousands of gallant soldiers
Hurry to take their stand beside our sons and our brothers.
Nobly they kept the faith; their honor is not for barter:
Theirs is the will to dare, and theirs is the power to do.
Show us the British flag, the flag of our noble ally."

Then from the balcony, the British consul full proudly
Lowered the silken folds in reach of the hands uplifted.
Many the lips that pressed the flag with its triple crosses,
Many the tears that fell in benison on its colors.
All the long night was heard the sound of succeeding footsteps,
Youth and manhood and age they came to honor the standard—
Mothers lifting their babes, that tiny fingers might touch it.
"This is the flag," they cried, "that drives from our throats the strangling
Fear, that there is for us that fate of all fates the saddest,
Crushed by brute force to live, a people without a country,
Bowing shamed, sullen brows before the insolent victor.
God, we thank Thee, that now our day-star of hope is rising."

Pale stars faded and fled before the breeze of the morning;
Grey dawn grew to amber, then glowed to a rose whose glory
Gave to the sentient soul the pain of too great a beauty.
Peace seemed to spread her wings in healing over the people.
Then, with uplifted brows, renewed hope lighting their faces,
Quietly home they moved, in patience to wait the future.

THE GREAT GRIEF

THERE comes a cry from the north and south,
A wail from the east and west;
And their echoes moan from zone to zone,
Voicing a sad unrest.
Mourn they the loss of their kindred dear,
Fed fast to the maw of war?
Is their wail of woe for those? Ah no,
Their sorrow is deeper far.

“Where shall we go for culture now?
Our souls are shaken with loss,
For culture (spelled with a capital C),
Which we drew from the thought of Germanie,
Where we meekly bowed the abject knee
And worshipped his haughty brow.

And who shall point us the grain of truth
In the Bible's bushelled chaff?
And teach us to smile with a quiet scorn,
At the story of Him, in the manger born,—
A sentimentalist dying forlorn
For His gospel of love and ruth?

And who shall teach us to bow aright
At the Atom's lordly shrine?
To worship the god of Material Might,
Which was, and which is, and which shall be Right
No matter what lives may feel the blight
Of the Superman's ruthless steel.”

For culture go to the Hottentot,
For creed to the chimpanzee;
Their shallower root bear a sweeter fruit
Than the German Upas-tree.

OUT OF THE DEEPS

OUT of the deeps, O Lord, out of the deeps,
To thee I cry.
The raging waters thunder o'er my head,
And blot the sky.

Even the sands beneath my stumbling feet
Shift to and fro.
My struggling heart keeps not its rhythmic beat,
It labors so.

The stinging salty spray is in my eyes,
I can not see,
Even the Rock to which I cling, O Lord
Leans down to me!

The futile moon peers furtively from out
The scowling sky;
Even the homeless wailing winds are not
So lone as I.

There is no hope for me now, but to watch
For Death's dark barge
To bear me to some haven of the soul
Beyond life's marge.

There shall I seek, and haply I may find,
And draw to me
The loved whose going cast me thus adrift
On life's rough sea.

IN TIME OF WAR

(Tune, Regent's Square)

FATHER, God, the fount of wisdom,
Whence we draw our little store,
Humbly now, we bow before Thee
For that wisdom to implore.
On us, in this hour of peril,
Pentecostal showers pour.

Great Jehovah, all the nations
Turn their anxious thoughts to Thee.
From this night of gloom and horror
Thou alone canst set them free.
From their eyes the scales of error
Cleanse that they may clearly see.

Give us courage ne'er to falter,
As we war, that wars may cease—
May Thy wisdom, love and justice,
In the minds of men increase.
Then will come the glorious dawning
Of a universal peace.

Cleanse our hearts of scorn and hatred,
As we gird us for the fight.
Judge between us and our brethren,
O Thou Wisdom Infinite!
Crush the serpent head of error,
So give victory to the right.





