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*The*RYERSON  
P O E T R Y  
CHAP-BOOKS

New York  
Nocturnes

By Arthur Stringer

New York  
Nocturnes

By Arthur Stringer

*This is Chap-Book Number One Hundred and Thirty-Two.  
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OF THIS EDITION OF NEW YORK NOCTURNES, BY ARTHUR STRINGER, FIVE HUNDRED COPIES ONLY HAVE BEEN PRINTED.

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ARTHUR STRINGER was born in 1874 in Chatham, Ontario, and educated at London Collegiate Institute, the University of Toronto, and later at Oxford University, England. After a time on the staff of the Montreal *Herald*, he went, at the invitation of the American Press Association, to New York where he spent many years writing the poetry and the stories for which he has become famous.

*The Ryerson Poetry*  
*Chapbooks*

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New York Nocturnes

*By Arthur Stringer*



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## THE CITY

She, with her wounds and emptying veins, may dream  
Of creeping death, yet laughs through pain and ruth.  
Her thinning blood made richer by that stream  
Of gladly-given plasma known as Youth.



## THE GEESE GO NORTH

High in the blue the wild geese arrow on  
And break the crystal silence with their call  
That spells unrest and old remembered springs.  
Dark in the dusk and silver in the dawn  
The far wedge floats, the pinions rise and fall  
As azure space is scythed by eager wings.  
And I who hear those bugling throats above  
These hills that are no longer home to me  
Must follow after them, must now go forth  
And seek the lake-lands that I know and love,  
The pine-dark ridge, the rivers running free,  
The blue-domed silence of the brooding North.



## THE ELMS AT THE PLAZA

*(Rockefeller Center)*

Brought helpless from some outland home,  
And barred as in a cage,  
Through steel-grilled beds of gardener's loam  
They now seek anchorage.

The winds of spring blow never sweet  
Between their straitened boles;  
The only stream that laves their feet  
Are spates of restless souls.

The sound that through their leafage steals  
Is never a white-throat's song;  
They only hear man's heartless wheels  
Where haste and madness throng.

But still past sterile iron and stone  
They grope to Mother Earth  
And seek the breast they must have known  
And reached for at their birth.

*And I, who knew a world afar  
Where life more richly ran,  
Here seem to lose some happier star  
For a city made of man.*



## CHRISTMAS-TREES IN WEST STREET

*(Dark and true and tender is the North.—Caedman)*

I pass where the pines for Christmas  
Stand thick in the crowded street,  
Where the groves of Dream and Silence  
Are paced by feverish feet.

And far through the rain and the street-cries  
My homesick heart goes forth  
To the pine-clad hills of childhood,  
To the dark and tender North.

And I see the blue-green pinelands  
And I thrill to the northland cold  
Where the sunset falls in silence  
On the hills of gloom and gold.

And the still dusk woods close round me,  
And I know the waiting eyes  
Of the North, like a child's, are tender,  
As a sorrowing mother's, wise.



## THE POET IN BATTERY PARK

We walk Time's crowded shore and day by day  
Weave idle dreams and with still childish hands  
Enscroll our foolish markings on the sands,  
And tide by tide our work seems washed away.

While they who live by labour, they whose fame  
Rests not on fruitless song but on that strife  
Whence come these solid walls and towers of life,  
In lordly granite leave a lasting name.

These toil-built walls, they say, live after us  
Who idly sing—and yet, beyond their ken,  
Past crumbling towers and tombs, song-hungry men  
Still listen to a lost Theocritus.



## THE JERSEY MEADOWS

Dry reeds and rustling grasses wave  
Amid the wintry cold;  
The low sun bathes the city towers  
In a tawny wash of gold.

Smoke-plumed, a phantom local drifts  
Across a rush-lined floor  
And melts into a hidden cave  
On the Hudson's terraced shore.

The dusk creeps down where waving sedge  
Moves like a quiet breast,  
And homebound toilers leave behind  
Their island of unrest,

And peace, beside the river's gloom  
Where banked lights come to life,  
Still frames and holds in quiet arms  
Man's fevered walls of strife.



## NIGHT CLUB IN WAR-TIME

They are not glad; their youth is gone,  
Yet here, to lethal staves,  
They dream they are not standing on  
A thousand distant graves.

Wine-flushed, they swarm and sing and joke  
Along the chromium bar,  
And the smoke they breathe is not the smoke  
Of battlefields afar.

But, spurning terrors best forgot  
Where gin for plasma runs,  
They hear the throb of brass, and not  
The throb of belching guns.

They dance and rest and watch and yawn  
And from night's quickened pace  
Store up pale joy against the dawn  
They stand too sad to face,

Since they are prisoners who pine  
At feasts that leave them thin;  
With grief that sours their sweetest wine,  
With hemlock in their gin.

Life, life they ask, at any cost,  
But loud their doom is read:  
*They in their gladness are the lost,  
The wounded, and the dead!*



## THE LOVER IN THE SUBWAY

Built of stone and steel they stand, the pride of our puny age;  
Inlaid with granite and iron they run, the roads of our hurrying rage,  
Arrogant cliffs of wonder and arroyos lamped with flame—  
But each at the breath of Time shall vanish the way it came.

Bridges across dark waters, tunnels beneath the earth,  
These shall be swept away as though they had known no birth  
And the roofs and the marbled walls melt down to the waiting dust  
And the turrets of stone be tumbled and the glories of steel be rust.

Cobweb and gossamer they, that the centuries brush aside  
Where the eagle will build her nest in their pinnacled lofts of pride,  
And the serpent along the street-curb and the grass in the empty  
square  
Will give scant thought of the glory lost hands once fashioned there.

But out of the ruins one thing must triumph and live, My Own,  
And that is our love, our deathless love, surviving all metal and  
stone;  
Though cities go out like candles, though rivers dry up like dew,  
Over the tombs of Time will echo my timeless cry for You.

*Yet, here in the Subway murk, where the flailing wheels strike fire,  
I wonder if men loved women in the time-lost streets of Tyre,  
If a breast as soft as your breast and a heart as warm with trust  
Can sleep but a drift of dust now under Cydonia's dust?*



## THE SEEING-EYE DOG

I watched the dog that patient-eyed  
Led on a sightless man  
Grown glad to trust a silent guide  
Where life so loudly ran.

Alert that leader of the blind  
Explored the crowded street,  
And, wise and voiceless, sought to find  
A path for sightless feet.

Alert he saw the red turn green,  
Then wove a tenuous way  
Amid the wheels that purred between  
The stop-lights' steady play.

And I who tread life's darkling maze  
With no such silent friend,  
And grope across Time's tangled ways  
And cannot see the end—

I ask that some mute faith of mine  
May guide me to that goal  
Where long-awaited light may shine  
On man's long-blinded soul.



## MIDNIGHT IN WALL STREET

A curving lane of quietude  
Their midday spate has grown  
Where peace and pallid shadows brood  
On windowed cliffs of stone.

The tumult of too fevered hours  
Is lost in dusk and sleep  
Where silence crowns the sullen towers  
And night reigns doubly deep.

For they who sought the golden fleece  
Have now foregone the quest;  
Their maelstrom is a thing of peace,  
Their mart a place of rest.

And where each grim wall skyward gropes  
As slumber softens life,  
It stands the grave of buried hopes,  
The tomb of ghostly strife.



## ROBIN IN GRAMERCY PARK

It flutes in the fading twilight,  
It calls through the ghost-like trees,  
And quick brings back my mothering North  
And the balm of a pineland breeze.

Afar from the city's tumult  
Where Spring so emptily wakes  
It carries me back to the balsam scent  
And the breath of the plunging Lakes.

That note through the dusty twilight  
Takes me out to a home of old  
Where the afterglow on the pine-dark hills  
Hung a tranquil crown of gold.

And the city becomes a ghost-land  
With its ghostly years of strife  
And the flute of a bird proclaims that peace  
Is the final gift of life.



## THE ART GALLERY AT DUSK

I lingered where the fading light  
Fell ghostly on the gilded frames,  
The painted faces touched with night,  
The kings with half-forgotten names.

I stood where dusk and silence fell  
On princes lost in robe and lace,  
On lips of some long-vanished belle,  
Some solemn burgher's shadowed face.

And calm before my questing gaze,  
In marbled sleep, white Venus stood,  
The treasured dream of far-off days  
Men called perfected womanhood.

*But you, the living, breathing you,  
Stepped close to where I mused alone;  
And ghost-like all mere pictures grew  
And Venus stood a block of stone.*



## THE PENGUIN AT THE PLAZA

Where the turrets of steel and granite  
Loom dark in the smoke-dulled sky  
The penguin, poised on the fountain's rim,  
Sent forth one dolorous cry.

The questioning cry of a sea-bird  
In a rookery not its own,  
That echoed up to the idling throng  
And the terraced walls of stone.

A faltering cry for the ice-fields  
Where the tundra meets the tide  
And a low sun gilds the polar dunes  
And the green-white icebergs ride.

*And we mortals who heard that lone cry  
Awaken and waver and climb,  
We too took thought of some ghostly Home  
Now lost in the mists of Time.*



## SPIDER UNDER BROOKLYN BRIDGE

I weave my silvered netting, thread by thread.  
Silk-like and tremulous in shadowed air,  
Small in this wider weaving overhead  
Where thunder rolls and restless mortals fare.

From me they may have learned of strain and stress,  
The woof that meets the warp and binds the net,  
The tissued film that floats in nothingness  
And leaves the tenuous cables firmly set.

I do not know; the ways of man are dim,  
Who laughs at space and marries land to land.  
*Mayhap some wider bridge towers over him  
With weavings he's too small to understand.*



## NIGHT RAIN ON BROADWAY

Where deep the lamp-strewn canyon twines  
Past shadowy tower and wall  
Starred bright with bulbs and neon signs  
Warm rain began to fall.

A sudden shower fell softly through  
Their night that was not night  
Where pavement pools of silvered blue  
Flung back the scattered light.

The toil-worn curb became a brook  
That rippled as it ran;  
The square took on the empty look  
Of lands unknown to man.

Where misted globes of red and green  
Blinked restless through the rain  
Their roadway of unrest lay clean  
As a tree-lined country lane.

And April freshness touched the soul  
Of all night's huddled throng  
As down their wearied valley stole  
Rain's lyric wash of song.



## THE AVENUE IN WAR-TIME

I watch their women come and go  
Along the street where flags still swing  
And gowns instead of tulips glow  
And hats instead of robins sing.  
I see them seek their nylon hose  
And scarfs as flimsy as a song  
And slips as fragile as a rose;  
And as they idly wander by  
I see above that queenly throng  
The old indifferent April sky.

But half a troubled world away  
In blackened towns where shrilling planes  
Sweep over tortured homes and spray  
Quick death instead of April rains,  
Gaunt women, groping through a pall  
Of dust and smoke, go grim of brow  
From rubble heap to tumbled wall,  
And in torn rooms where beams are piled  
And all they prized is vanished now,  
They dig to find a battered child.



## PIGEON FEEDER IN BRYANT PARK

His life as faded as his coat,  
He leans across his cane  
And views each iridescent throat  
That seeks his scattered grain.

Despite the frugal days he lives  
He flouts greed's ancient law,  
And reigns a king, and kingly gives  
To fill a pigeon's crow.

Since his starved heart pale solace wrings  
From hunger thus appeased  
He in the midst of fluttering wings  
Finds ghostlier hungers eased.

And sitting placid in the sun,  
He hears the muted sound  
Of moiling souls who blindly shun  
The bird-like peace he's found.



## EAST-SIDE TEACHER

Behind her ink-stained desk, as on a bridge  
Above a deck of upturned eyes,  
She sits the captain of a noisy crew  
That little cares where Knowledge lies.

Adroit, discreet, her sternness but a mask  
To leave her mistress of tumultuous youth,  
She trims the sails of discipline and steers  
The devious course that leads to Truth.

Staid watcher of soft growth still April-small,  
She, from the calm that Autumns bring,  
Sees life reborn in yearly bursts of bloom  
And old despairs made glad with Spring.

And sensing from the bud the open flower,  
She guards those petals half-unfurled,  
And in a casual hand made white with chalk  
She holds and molds the coming world.



## TO A CERTAIN MILLIONAIRE

“Much treasure will be mine when once I yield  
This Sabine horde my City,” darkly mused  
Tarpeia of the Gate,  
“Much wealth of precious stone and golden shield.”  
Rome fell to them,—this many a year was writ  
The story of her fate  
And how, for thanks, they flung their gold till bruised  
And broken she lay dying under it.

So you, who gave long years to seek success,  
You who betrayed that guarded citadel  
Where burns life’s inner flame,  
Forgetting all that is not bought or sold  
And planning only how to onward press,  
Are given what you claim,  
And crowned at last by what you love so well  
Lie smothered in your million bits of gold!



## ARAN GIRL ON ELLIS ISLAND

She waits unwelcomed in the crowded room  
That seems too sordid for a Door of Hope,  
Her sea-grey eyes untouched with doubt or gloom,  
Her old-world wealth a bundle tied with rope.

The young breast mounded under rustic frieze  
May house new wonderments, but never fear,  
As grim, untamed, she flairs the harbour breeze  
And views the fabled towers that loom so near.

Yet half defiant, though forlorn, she feels  
Scant terror at the land of toil and gold  
So far from currachs and from salty creels  
And fog-draped islands that are dour and old.

For through her flows the blood of sea-cubbed men  
Who warred and sang and roamed the Outer Isles  
And heard the warning drums from glen to glen  
And the call of pipes across embattled kyles.

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