

THE VANGUARD: A
POEM BY W. WILFRED
CAMPBELL, ISSUED
PRIVATELY TO HIS
FRIENDS FOR THE NEW
YEAR 1901.

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The Vanguard.

Out of the grey light,
Into the daylight,
We are his battlemen
 Riding along;
Century-laden,
To some dim aidenn,
Hope in our vanguard,
 Courage, our song.
“Check up the curb there!”
“Firm in the stirrup, there!”
“Steady! men, steady!”
“Riding along!”

Out of the grim light,
Into the dim light,
Under the morning airs,
 Where the pale stars
Fade with the dying
Murk of night flying,
Into the smoke-mists,
 Over earth's bars—
Where the dim sorrows
Of long-dead to-morrows
Sink into ashes,
 Crumble to night—
Cheerfully, gravely,
Manfully, bravely,
Ride we, ride we,
 Into His light.

There was an Inn, we
Rang to begin, we
Thundered its rafters
 With generous song—
There a low mound, we
Left a brave comrade,
Worn of the journey,
 Riding along.

There was a battle fought,
Fiercely the blades rang,
Horseman and charger
 Grappled the foe—

Hard spent and hard hit,
Teeth clenched and foaming bit,
Out of the battle-smoke,
Forward we go.

Bravely faced, bravely won,
Nobly died, nobly done,
Lifting the firm face,
Riding along:
Always to hillward,
Truth and God-will ward,
Never toward darkness,
Never toward wrong;
Not dumb cattle! men,
We are God's battlemen,
Waging His fierce fights
Under the night,
Under the smoke-mists,
Through the dim centuries,
Ride we, ride we,
Into His light.

Hold up the head, there!
Quicker the tread, there!
Eyes on the mountain heights!
Lift the old song!
"Bravely the right goes,
"Down with the dread foes,
"Evil and sorrow,
"Hate and old wrong!
"Doubt, but the battle-smoke,
"Dusk, but the morning's cloak,
"Care and despairing but
"Dreams of the night;
"Roll the grey mists up!
"Drain deep the dawn-cup!
"Ride we, ride we,
"Into His light!"

Old men and young men,
Cheering the faint ones,
Bearing the weak ones,
Chiding the strong;
Over the dead past,
Ice-cold, furnace-blast,
Riding along;

We are His valiant hearts,
Wending His journey dread
Eyes to the hills ahead,
Hearken our song:—
“Watch for His dawning! mark,
“Sorrow but the shrivelled bark,
“Love the white kernel sap;
“Hatred and wrong,
“But the fierce, sudden hail,
“Rattling our iron mail,
“Riding along.”

Yea, as we thunder, we
Know earth’s old wonder, we
Feel all about us
Her splendor and tears;
Her might and her glory,
Her centuried story,
Her weird, blind caravan
Down the dead years.
Her grief and her wisdom,
Her heart-breaks and yearning,
Her legends of iron-eaten,
Blood-crusteds wars:—
Her loves and despairings,
Wrecks of old dynasties,
Barbarous; splendid and
Old as the stars:—
They who look down on us,
Cold in their far-light,
Orient, mystical,
Under the night;
Weird in their silence,
Grim, fixed witnesses,
Long, of earth’s struggles,
Her great grim graveyards,
Of passion and might.
But under we thunder,
Charge, battle, and blunder,
Out of the night-mists,
Unto the day,
Led by an impulse,
A fierce joy and heart-hope,
Older and stronger
And greater than they.
Sound the clear bugle, there!

Wide, let the summons blare!
Challenge the centuries,
Fearless of wrong!

Bury that dead face!
Strong heart, fill his place!
Tenderly, manfully,
Riding along!
Eyes to the right ahead!
Grim be the way we tread,
Sound down the silence, murk,
Hope's golden horn!
Sweet, sweet! silver clear!
Challenging despair and fear,
Though life be at its neap,
Death is but the morning sleep,
Ere day be born.

Close up amain, there!
Curb on that rein, there!
Eyes hillward and Godward,
Forging ahead!
Down the dread journey,
Flashing the stern eye,
Out on dim iron-peaks
Lifetimes ahead!
Searching the night-line,
Murk's fading white line,
For the dawn's message,
For the day's red;
Sinking old sorrows
In nobler to-morrows,
Ringing the levin
With earth's battle-song;
Hugging the after
Tears of old laughter,
Hopeward and Godward,
Riding along.

Eyes to the front, there!
Iron 'gainst the brunt, there!
Jarring the battle shock,
Under the night;
From earth's weird wonder,
We thunder, we thunder,
Out from the centuries?

Battle and blight;
Clear, dear, our bugles, clear,
Challenging despair and fear,
Ride we, ride we,
 Into His light.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Obvious printer errors have been corrected.

Author punctuation preserved.

[The end of *The Vanguard: A Poem* by William Wilfred Campbell]