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# **NEW POEMS**

**BY**

**CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS**

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# CONTENTS

TO SHAKESPEARE, IN 1916

"THE UNKNOWN CITY"

O EARTH, SUFFICING ALL OUR NEEDS

MONITION

ON THE ROAD

HILL TOP SONGS:

I. HERE ON THE HILL

II. WHEN THE LIGHTS COME OUT

IN THE VALLEY OF LUCHON

THE GOOD EARTH

WAYFARER OF EARTH

UNDER THE PILLARS OF THE SKY

ALL NIGHT THE LONE CICADA

EASTWARD BOUND

WHEN IN THE ROWAN TREE

WITH APRIL HERE

FROM THE HIGH WINDOW OF YOUR ROOM

THE HOUR OF MOST DESIRE

THE FLOWER

WHEN THE CLOUD COMES DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

THE STREAM

THE SUMMONS

THE PLACE OF HIS REST

GOING OVER

CAMBRAI AND MARNE

# NEW POEMS

## TO SHAKESPEARE, IN 1916

With what white wrath must turn thy bones,  
What stern amazement flame thy dust,  
To feel so near this England's heart  
The outrage of the assassin's thrust!

How must thou burn to have endured  
The acclaim of these whose fame unclean  
Reeks from the "Lusitania's" slain,  
Stinks from the orgies of Malines!

But surely, too, thou art consoled  
(Who knew'st thy stalwart breed so well)  
To see us rise from sloth, and go,  
Plain and unbragging, through this hell.

And surely, too, thou art assured.  
Hark how that grim and gathering beat  
Draws upwards from the ends of earth,—  
The tramp, tramp, of thy kinsmen's feet.

## "THE UNKNOWN CITY"

There lies a city inaccessible,  
Where the dead dreamers dwell.

Abrupt and blue, with many a high ravine  
And soaring bridge half seen.  
With many an iris cloud that comes and goes  
Over the ancient snows,  
The imminent hills environ it, and hold  
Its portals from of old,  
That grief invade not, weariness, nor war,  
Nor anguish evermore.

White-walled and jettied on the peacock tide,  
With domes and towers enskied,  
Its battlements and balconies one sheen  
Of ever-living green,  
It hears the happy dreamers turning home  
Slow-oared across the foam.

Cool are its streets with waters musical  
And fountains' shadowy fall.  
With orange and anemone and rose,

And every flower that blows  
Of magic scent or unimagined dye,  
Its gardens shine and sigh.  
Its chambers, memoried with old romance  
And faëry circumstance,—  
From any window love may lean some time  
For love that dares to climb.

This is that city babe and seer divined  
With pure, believing mind.  
This is the home of unachieved emprise.  
Here, here the visioned eyes  
Of them that dream past any power to do,  
Wake to the dream come true.  
Here the high failure, not the level fame,  
Attests the spirit's aim.  
Here is fulfilled each hope that soared and sought  
Beyond the bournes of thought.

The obdurate marble yields; the canvas glows;  
Perfect the column grows;  
The chorded cadence art could ne'er attain  
Crowns the imperfect strain;  
And the great song that seemed to die unsung  
Triumphs upon the tongue.

## **O EARTH, SUFFICING ALL OUR NEEDS**

O earth, sufficing all our needs, O you  
With room for body and for spirit too,  
How patient while your children vex their souls  
Devising alien heavens beyond your blue!

Dear dwelling of the immortal and unseen,  
How obstinate in my blindness have I been,  
Not comprehending what your tender calls,  
Veiled promises and re-assurance, mean.

Not far and cold the way that they have gone  
Who through your sundering darkness have withdrawn;  
Almost within our hand-reach they remain  
Who pass beyond the sequence of the dawn.

Not far and strange the Heaven, but very near,  
Your children's hearts unknowingly hold dear.  
At times we almost catch the door swung wide.  
And unforgotten voice almost we hear,

I am the heir of Heaven—and you are just.  
You, you alone I know—and you I trust.  
I have sought God beyond his farthest star—

But here I find Him, in your quickening dust.

## MONITION

A faint wind, blowing from World's End,  
Made strange the city street.  
A strange sound mingled in the fall  
Of the familiar feet.

Something unseen whirled with the leaves  
To tap on door and sill.  
Something unknown went whispering by  
Even when the wind was still.

And men looked up with startled eyes  
And hurried on their way,  
As if they had been called, and told  
How brief their day.

## ON THE ROAD

Ever just over the top of the next brown rise  
I expect some wonderful thing to flatter my eyes.  
"What's yonder?" I ask of the first wayfarer I meet.  
"Nothing!" he answers, and looks at my travel-worn feet.

"Only more hills and more hills, like the many you've passed,  
With rough country between, and a poor enough inn at the last."  
But already I am a-move, for I see he is blind,  
And I hate that old grumble I've listened to time out of mind.

I've tramped it too long not to know there is truth in it still,  
That lure of the turn of the road, of the crest of the hill.  
So I breast me the rise with full hope, well assured I shall see  
Some new prospect of joy, some brave venture a tip-toe for me.

For I have come far, and confronted the calm and the strife.  
I have fared wide, and bit deep in the apple of life.  
It is sweet at the rind, but oh, sweeter still at the core;  
And whatever be gained, yet the reach of the morrow is more.

At the crest of the hill I shall hail the new summits to climb.  
The demand of my vision shall beggar the largess of time.  
For I know that the higher I press, the wider I view,  
The more's to be ventured and visioned, in worlds that are new.

So when my feet, failing, shall stumble in ultimate dark,

And faint eyes no more the high lift of the pathway shall mark,  
There under the dew I'll lie down with my dreams, for I know  
What bright hill-tops the morning will show me, all red in the glow.

## HILL TOP SONGS

### I

Here on the hill  
At last the soul sees clear.  
Desire being still  
The High Unseen appear.  
The thin grass bends  
One way, and hushed attends  
Unknown and gracious ends.  
Where the sheep's pasturing feet  
Have cleft the sods  
The mystic light lies sweet;  
The very clods,  
In purpling hues elate,  
Thrill to their fate;  
The high rock-hollows wait,  
Expecting gods.

### II

When the lights come out in the cottages  
    Along the shores at eve,  
And across the darkening water  
    The last pale shadows leave;

And up from the rock-ridged pasture slopes  
    The sheep-bell tinklings steal,  
And the folds are shut, and the shepherds  
    Turn to their quiet meal;

And even here, on the unfenced height,  
    No journeying wind goes by,  
But the earth-sweet smells, and the home-sweet sounds,  
    Mount, like prayer, to the sky;

Then from the door of my opened heart  
    Old blindness and pride are driven,  
Till I know how high is the humble,  
    The dear earth how close to heaven.

## IN THE VALLEY OF LUCHON

Day long, and night long,  
From the soaring peaks and the snow,  
Down through the valley villages  
The cold white waters flow.

Quiet are the villages;  
And very quiet the cloud  
At rest on the breast of the mountain;  
But the falling waves are loud

Through the little, clustering cottages,  
Through the little, climbing fields,  
Where every sunburnt vineyard  
Its patch of purple yields.

High hung, a steel-bright scimitar,  
The crooked glacier gleams.  
The white church dreams in the valley  
Where the red oleander dreams.

And every wonder of beauty  
Comes, as a dream comes, true,  
Where the sun drips rose from the ledges  
And the moon by the peak swims blue.

## THE GOOD EARTH

The smell of burning weeds  
Upon the twilight air;  
The piping of the frogs  
From meadows wet and bare;

A presence in the wood,  
And in my blood a stir;  
In all the ardent earth  
No failure or demur.

O spring wind, sweet with love  
And tender with desire,  
Pour into veins of mine  
Your pure, impassioned fire.

O waters running free  
With full, exultant song,  
Give me, for outworn dream,  
Life that is clean and strong.



O good Earth, warm with youth,  
My childhood heart renew.  
Make me elate, sincere,  
Simple and glad, as you.

O springing things of green,  
O waiting things of bloom,  
O winging things of air,  
Your lordship now resume.

## WAYFARER OF EARTH

Up, Heart of mine,  
Thou wayfarer of earth!  
Of seed divine,  
Be mindful of thy birth.  
Though the flesh faint  
Through long-endured constraint  
Of nights and days,  
Lift up thy praise  
To life, that set thee in such strenuous ways,  
And left thee not  
To drowse and rot  
In some thick-perfumed and luxurious plot.

Strong, strong is earth  
With vigour for thy feet,  
To make thy wayfaring  
Tireless and fleet.  
And good is earth,—  
But earth not all thy good,  
O thou with seed of suns  
And star-fire in thy blood!

And though thou feel  
The slow clog of the hours  
Laden upon thy heel,  
Put forth thy powers.  
Thine the deep sky,  
The unpreempted blue,  
The haste of storm,  
The hush of dew.  
Thine, thine the free  
Exalt of star and tree,  
The reinless run  
Of wind and sun,  
The vagrance of the sea.

## UNDER THE PILLARS OF THE SKY

Under the pillars of the sky  
I played at life, I knew not why.

The grave recurrence of the day  
Was matter of my trivial play.

The solemn stars, the sacred night,  
I took for toys of my delight,

Till now, with startled eyes, I see  
The portents of Eternity.

## ALL NIGHT THE LONE CICADA

All night the lone cicada  
Kept shrilling through the rain,  
A voice of joy undaunted  
By unforgotten pain.

Down from the tossing branches  
Rang out the high refrain,  
By tumult undisheartened,  
By storm assailed in vain.

To looming vasts of mountain,  
To shadowy deeps of plain  
The ephemeral, brave defiance  
Adventured not in vain,—

Till to my faltering spirit,  
And to my weary brain,  
From loss and fear and failure  
My joy returned again.

## EASTWARD BOUND

We mount the arc of ocean's round  
To meet the splendours of the sun;  
Then downward rush into the dark  
When the blue, spacious day is done.

The slow, eternal drift of stars  
Draws over us until the dawn.  
Then the grey steep we mount once more,  
And night is down the void withdrawn.

Space, and interminable hours,  
And moons that rise, and sweep, and fall,—  
On-swinging earth, and orbéd sea,—  
And voyaging souls more vast than all!

### WHEN IN THE ROWAN TREE

When in the rowan tree  
The coloured light fades slowly,  
And the quiet dusk,  
All liliated, breathes of you,  
Then, Heart's Content,  
I feel your hair enfolding me,  
And tender comes the dark,  
Bringing me—you.

And when across the sea  
The rose-dawn opens slowly,  
And the gold breaks, and the blue,  
All glad of you,  
Then, Heart's Reward,  
Red, red is your mouth for me,  
And life to me means love,  
And love means—you.

### WITH APRIL HERE

With April here,  
And first thin green on the awakening bough,  
What wonderful things and dear,  
My tired heart to cheer,  
At last appear!  
Colours of dream afloat on cloud and tree,  
So far, so clear,  
A spell, a mystery;  
And joys that thrill and sing,  
New come on mating wing,  
The wistfulness and ardour of the Spring,—  
And Thou!

### FROM THE HIGH WINDOW OF YOUR ROOM

From the high window of your room,  
Above the roofs, and streets, and cries,  
Lying awake and still, I watch  
The wonder of the dawn arise.

Slow tips the world's deliberate rim,  
Descending to the baths of day:  
Up floats the pure, ethereal tide  
And floods the outworn dark away.

The city's sprawled, uneasy bulk  
Illumines slowly in my sight.  
The crowded roofs, the common walls,  
The grey streets, melt in mystic light.

It passes. Then, with longing sore  
For that veiled light of paradise,  
I turn my face,—and find it in  
The wonder of your waking eyes.

## THE HOUR OF MOST DESIRE

It is not in the day  
That I desire you most,  
Turning to seek your smile  
For solace or for joy.

Nor is it in the dark,  
When I toss restlessly,  
Groping to find your face,  
Half waking, half in dream.

It is not while I work,—  
When, to endear success,  
Or rob defeat of pain,  
I weary for your hands.

Nor while from work I rest,  
And rest is all unrest  
For lack of your dear voice,  
Your laughter, and your lips.

But every hour it is  
That I desire you most,—  
Need you in all my life  
And every breath I breathe.

## THE FLOWER

I am the man who found a flower,  
A blossom blown upon the wind,  
More radiant than the sunrise rose,  
More sweet than lotus-air of Ind.

I clutched the flower, and on my heart  
I crushed its petals, red and burning.  
O ecstasy of life new-born!  
O youth returned, the unreturning!

I am the man who dared the Gods  
And under their thunderbolts lay blest,  
Because I found the flower, and wore it  
One wild hour upon my breast.

## WHEN THE CLOUD COMES DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

When the cloud comes down the mountain,  
And the rain is loud on the leaves,  
And the slim flies gather for shelter  
Under my cabin eaves,—

Then my heart goes out to earth,  
With the swollen brook runs free,  
Drinks life with the drenched brown roots,  
And climbs with the sap in the tree.

## THE STREAM

I know a stream  
Than which no lovelier flows.  
Its banks a-gleam  
With yarrow and wild rose,  
Singing it goes  
And shining through my dream.

Its waters glide  
Beneath the basking noon,  
A magic tide  
That keeps perpetual June.

There the light sleeps  
Unstirred by any storm;  
The wild mouse creeps  
Through tall weeds hushed and warm;

And the shy snipe,  
Alighting unafraid;  
With sudden pipe  
Awakes the dreaming shade.

So long ago!  
Still, still my memory hears  
Its silver flow  
Across the sundering years,—  
Its roses glow,  
Ah, through what longing tears!

## THE SUMMONS

Deeps of the wind-torn west,  
Flaming and desolate,  
Upsprings my soul from his rest  
With your banners at the gate.

'Neath this o'er-mastering sky  
How could the heart lie still,  
Or the sluggish will  
Content in the old chains lie,  
When over the lonely hill  
Your torn wild scarlets cry?

Up, Soul, and out  
Into the deeps alone,  
To the long peal and the shout  
Of those trumpets blown and blown.

## THE PLACE OF HIS REST

The green marsh-mallows  
Are over him.  
Along the shallows  
The pale lights swim.

Wide air, washed grasses,  
And waveless stream;  
And over him passes  
The drift of dream;—

The pearl-hue down  
Of the poplar seed;  
The elm-flower brown;  
And the sway of the reed;

The blue moth, winged  
With a flake of sky;  
The bee, gold ringed;  
And the dragon fly.

Lightly the rushes,  
Lean to his breast;  
A bird's wing brushes  
The place of his rest.

The far-flown swallow,  
The gold-finch flame,—  
They come, they follow  
The paths he came.

'Tis the land of No Care  
Where now he lies,  
Fulfilled the prayer  
Of his weary eyes:

And while around him  
The kind grass creeps,  
Where peace hath found him  
How sound he sleeps.

Well to his slumber  
Attends the year:  
Soft rains without number  
Soft noons, blue clear,

With nights of balm,  
And the dark, sweet hours  
Brooding with calm,  
Pregnant with flowers.

See how she speeds them,  
Each childlike bloom,  
And softly leads them  
To tend his tomb!—

The white thorn nears  
As the cowslip goes;  
Then the iris appears;  
And then, the rose.

## GOING OVER

A girl's voice in the night troubled my heart.  
Across the roar of the guns, the crash of the shells,  
Low and soft as a sigh, clearly I heard it.

Where was the broken parapet, crumbling about me?  
Where my shadowy comrades, crouching expectant?  
A girl's voice in the dark troubled my heart.

A dream was the ooze of the trench, the wet clay slipping,  
A dream the sudden out-flare of the wide-flung Verys.  
I saw but a garden of lilacs, a-flower in the dusk.

What was the sergeant saying?—I passed it along.—  
Did I pass it along? I was breathing the breath of the lilacs.  
For a girl's voice in the night troubled my heart.

Over! How the mud sucks! Vomits red the barrage.  
But I am far off in the hush of a garden of lilacs.  
For a girl's voice in the night troubled my heart.  
Tender and soft as a sigh, clearly I heard it.

## CAMBRAI AND MARNE

Before our trenches at Cambrai  
We saw their columns cringe away.  
We saw their masses melt and reel  
Before our line of leaping steel.

A handful to their storming hordes  
We scourged them with the scourge of swords,  
And still, the more we slew, the more  
Came up for every slain a score.

Between the hedges and the town  
Their cursing squadrons we rode down.  
To stay them we outpoured our blood  
Between the beetfields and the wood.

In that red hell of shrieking shell  
Unflinching our gunners fell.  
They fell, or ere that day was done,  
Beside the last unshattered gun.

But still we held them, like a wall  
On which the breakers vainly fall—  
Till came the word, and we obeyed,  
Reluctant, bleeding, undismayed.

Our feet, astonished, learned retreat,  
Our souls rejected still defeat.  
Unbroken still, a lion at bay,  
We drew back grimly from Cambrai.

In blood and sweat, with slaughter spent,  
They thought us beaten as we went;



Till suddenly we turned and smote  
The shout of triumph in their throat.

At last, at last we turned and stood—  
And Marne's fair water ran with blood.  
We stood by trench and steel and gun,  
For now the indignant flight was done.

We ploughed their shaken ranks with fire.  
We trod their masses into mire.  
Our sabres drove through their retreat,  
As drives the whirlwind through young wheat.

At last, at last we flung them back  
Along their drenched and smoking track.  
We hurled them back, in blood and flame,  
The reeking ways by which they came.

By cumbered road and desperate ford,  
How fled their shamed and harassed horde!  
Shout, Sons of Freemen, for the day  
When Marne so well avenged Cambrai!

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[End of *New Poems*, by Charles G. D. Roberts]