

The Lions' Gate
and Other
Verses

Lily Alice Lefevre
1895

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THE
LIONS'
GATE AND OTHER VERSES

By LILY ALICE LEFEVRE.

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CONTENTS.

[The Lions' Gate](#)

[Requital](#)

[Credo](#)

[Moritura Te Salutat](#)

[Indian Summer](#)

[One Christmas Eve \(1633\)](#)

[Across the Gulf](#)

[Aspirations](#)

[Miramar](#)

[A Fairy Tale](#)

[Night](#)

[Dawn](#)

[Sweet Wind of Eve](#)

[Brise du Soir](#)

[Ninon](#)

[In Memoriam](#)

[Achievement](#)

[The Winter's Queen](#)

[Prologue](#)

[The Spirit of the Carnival](#)

[Song of the St. Lawrence](#)

[The Tay Bridge](#)

[Imprisoned](#)

[The Valley of Time](#)

[A Welcome to Montreal, \(Lord Dufferin\)](#)

[Eagle Pass](#)

[Rondeau](#)

[De Profundis](#)

[A Voice From the West](#)

TO MY MOTHER.

Thy gentle praise once crowned my simple songs,
To thy dear memory now this book belongs.

THE LIONS' GATE AND OTHER VERSES.

THE LIONS' GATE.

[The two highest peaks of the mountains that overlook the harbour of Vancouver bear a strong resemblance in outline to the lions of Trafalgar Square.]

In the northern sky we couchant lie
On guard by the western seas,
Where the cliffs draw back from the narrow track
Of the tide and the ocean breeze,
Stern and grim on the mountain's rim
We crouch in our cloudy lair,
Behind the veil of the snow mist pale
We are waiting and watching there.

When the foam flies fast as the gale rides past
Outside on the rolling bay,
Our challenge roars on the rocky shores
At the foot of our ramparts grey,
The waves retreat with a sullen beat
For they dare not pass us by,
And the Inlet's breast is a dream of rest
Where the white sails folded lie.

We calmly rise on the amber skies
When the sun and the sea have kissed,
And the glory fills all the circling hills

And the glory and the crown and

That glow in a rainbow mist,
When the radiance falls on our granite walls
And the purple peaks unfold,
We fling to the sky from our fortress on high
Cloud banners of crimson and gold.

And far below where the waters flow
The stately ships sail through,
For the fair surprise of a city lies
Where the forest giants grew,
She holds the key of an Empire free
Whose glory has but begun,
The nations meet at Vancouver's feet,
The East and the West are one.

We gaze afar to the last faint star
Ere its light in the dawning dies,
And a vision breaks ere the morn awakes
To our clear and steadfast eyes,—
Like the flocking wings that the autumn brings
When the sea-gulls gathering fly,
To their haven of rest on the harbor's breast
Shall the fleets of the world sweep by!

The sap that stirs in our mighty firs
Fed by the northern dew,
Though chilled by death, in carven wreath
Shall bud and bloom anew,
Barbaric kings where the bulbul sings
Shall couch 'neath the polished beams
Whose mossy mould once slowly rolled
Down far Canadian streams.

And deep within our forests dim
The Spirit of Beauty dwells,
Where the long moss sways thro' the woodland ways
O'er the foxglove's fair bells.

To the dawn she springs on the starry wings
That were folded in darkness long,—
The glorious theme of the artist's dream,
The soul of the poet's song!

Through our open gate shall the land await
The Orient's fragrant spoil,
And the golden grain shall flow forth again
To the millions who starve and toil;
Forest and field their wealth shall yield
To men who are strong and brave,
And still on high in Canadian sky
Shall the banner of Freedom wave.

We sentry stand by Heaven's command
At the portal of her sway,
No threatening foe dare pass below
While her Lions guard the way!
Stern and grim on the mountain's rim
We crouch in our cloudy lair,
Behind the veil of the snow mist pale
We are waiting and watching there.

REQUITAL.

Down floating through the rosy morning light
The Days come one by one in long array,
God's radiant Messengers to man are they
Bearing His blessings earthwards in their flight,
Contentment, Peace, fair Love, and Pleasures bright;
And some bring Pain, but whisper as they lay
The burden on our hearts, "Another Day
Shall lift thy sorrow, first must come the night."
Yet soon, their shining raiment stained and dim,
Our gentle guests in Folly's thralldom sigh,
Till sunset signals call them home to Him
With trailing wings that sweep the twilight sky.
Oh, Night! fall fast to hide the wounds they bear,
Sin, crimson-dyed,—grey Doubt, and dark Despair!

CREDO.

Through dim cathedral shadows
A flood of music swells,
Now loud as thunder pealing,
Now sweet as silver bells;
Above each crimson casement,
Through fretted arch and shrine,
The mighty sound is rolling
In harmony divine.

“Credo in unum Deum!”
A single voice we hear
That rises through the chorus
Sustained and pure and clear;
Up through the purple twilight,
Above the organ’s tone,
It floats upon the music
As though it sang alone.

The world sweeps on forever
To Life’s great organ tones,
Earth’s myriad voices blending
Peal from its rolling zones;
Songs of exulting Science,
Pæans of progress won,
The low and muttering thunder
Of Labour’s march begun,—

Sighs of the heavy burdened,
Their cross by Faith unblessed,
And mad, despairing laughter
Wrung from the atheist’s breast;
Babble of giddy pleasure
That dances o’er the tomb.

And warning tones unheeded
That preach the hour of doom:

All sounds of woe and sorrow,
Rejoicings, clash of wars,
Meet in the mighty chorus
That rises to the stars.
Yet purer, sweeter, clearer,
One strain is borne above
The warrior's shout of Freedom,
The Poet's song of Love:

“Credo in unum Deum!”
It rises night and day
From countless holy altars,
From countless souls that pray.
Man's spirit, earth disdainng,
In glorious vision soars
Where senses, sight, forgetting,
He knows, and he adores!

O voice of faith triumphant!
Still raise that great refrain,
Though Heaven seems far and empty
Through clouds of doubt and pain,—
O hearts that Death's cold sceptre
Is touching one by one,
Sing on of life immortal
And joy beyond the sun!

When hushed Earth's mighty music,
And mute her songs of pride,
When Wealth and Fame have vanished
With gods they glorified,—
“Credo in unum Deum!”
Shall sound when Darkness hurls
His bolt, eternal Silence,

Upon the wreck of worlds!

MORITURA TE SALUTAT.

[The wreck of the “Beaver” lies near the entrance of Vancouver harbour, within a short distance of the course of the Empresses, the new steamships of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The “Beaver” was the pioneer steamer of the Pacific Ocean—1835.]

A broken hulk, forlorn and lost am I,
Above me frown the cliffs in ramparts high,
Beneath on rocky ledge
I stranded lie.

Around, the hungry waves await their prey,
They surge above my head and day by day
I crumble as they steal
My life away.

Yet not alone despoiled by wind and wave,
But Man whom I have served, disdains to save,
And robs me as I sink
Into my grave.

The sea-weed damp and chill binds fast my breast,
Yet deep below in passionate unrest
There stirs a hope, a dream
Unknown, unguessed.

At morn, when the first ray of daylight creeps
Through clinging mists where soft the darkness sleeps,
And faintly trembles down
To dusky deeps,—

At noon, when clear and bright the waters spread
And Ocean scarcely moves to rock my bed,
While droops the golden moss

Above my head,—

At eve, when shadows fall and winds are free,
And moaning surges call aloud for me
To sink to sleep at last

Beneath the sea,—

Still do I gaze afar, still do I wait,
Watching for her who comes in royal state
To sweep majestic through

The Lion's Gate!

Great Empress, proud, serene! thy coming fleet
Announced by herald echoes wild and sweet,
The purple hills proclaim,

The vales repeat.

To my dull vision, from the world apart,
Thou seem'st a miracle of magic art,
Strange forces throb and glow

Within thy heart!

Fair white Enchantress, from the Orient sped!
Its fragrance and its spice around thee shed
Still lingering incense breathe

About thy head.

Above thy path the gleaming sea-gulls fly,
Like mystic spirits weave in circles high
A charm of waving wings

Against the sky!

I know thou dost not heed my dreary lot,
Nor mark in passing by the lonely spot
Where desolate I lie

By all forgot.

The Past am I, but yet thou canst not chide
The worship thou hast won from ancient pride
Whose youth once challenged Fate,
And Time defied.

For had I never crossed this Western sea,
Nor braved its wrath to find a path for thee,
Where then thy stately grace
Secure and free?

I toiled through calm and storm for many a year,
While yet th'untrodden forest slumbered here,
Of progress, faith and peace
The pioneer.

And Science made me strong to prove her worth
Her dawning light was shed upon my birth,
Whose glory now is spread
Through all the earth!

But now my work is done—I sink to rest—
Fair Empress! may the wave thou hast caressed
In music murmur still
Above my breast.

And when at midnight's hour thou drawest nigh
And softly through the mists that sleeping lie
The star upon thy brow
Is gliding by—

Oh, may its light that trembles o'er my tomb
With dreams of thee steal downwards through the gloom,
Where I beneath the sea
Have found my doom!

INDIAN SUMMER.

As in some Eastern clime when shadows steal
Into a fragrant room where all day long
The dark eyed maidens thread the shining pearls
With jests and merry laughter, one may cry
“Mine shall be necklet for a Queen, behold!”
Lifting with fair round arm its lustrous length
Against the crimson sky,—yet soon rejoice
To find a brighter, purer cluster still
And dreaming o’er their beauty let them fall
Each separate along the silken thread,
With soft caress of rosy finger-tips
That linger at the last,—so smiling stands
Rich Autumn counting o’er her treasured hours,
And slowly dropping from reluctant hands
Down the long-swaying misty strands of Time
The dreamy splendor of these days divine.

ONE CHRISTMAS EVE (1633).

From all our ancient forests, lakes, and streams,
A murmur of the past arises still,
And mingles with the wind that sadly sweeps
In chill December through the leafless boughs,—
Clear tones of preaching, wild appealing prayers,
The moaning of the tortured, and the stern
Reproving words of priests, the furious din
Of savage revelry, and high above them all
The long sweet cadence of the evening hymn
Sung by the martyr with his latest breath,—
And countless tales of duty nobly done
Still sparkle on our history's early page
Like jewels on some antique missal's rim.
But in few words the saddest fate is told,
Of one who came to these Canadian wilds
Strong in his self-renouncing faith and love,—
The youngest of his brotherhood,—and died
The only one who toiled and prayed in vain,
Suffered all things, yet missed the martyr's palm,
And brought no spirit with him home to God.

“Again the dull crash of the icy boughs
Upon the birch-bark roof, again the long
Low wail of winter winds among the trees,
While near me, in the wigwam's narrow space,
Lit by the blazing pine-knot's ruddy glow,
Dark faces gleam like demons through the smoke
That the wild storm drives back within our hut;
And I, to seek a breath of purer air
Press close against the crevices, where still
Creeps in the stinging blast, and strive to read
My breviary, whose letters seem of blood
To my scorched eyes.—in vain.—the sacred page

Fades into visions of the dreary past,
When through the frozen forests day by day,
I struggled onward with my heavy load
O'er fallen trunks and matted cedar swamps
And pathless drifts of snow,—the nightly camp
When I, alone amid a savage horde
Shrank from their deeds of wanton cruelty,
And weakly strove to raise a pleading voice
Above the sorcerer's din of dance and drum.
And now among them still I daily toil
In loneliness and peril,—yet I know
Oh, God! Thy will hath led me to these wilds,
And so—I am content.

I look around

Where stretched in slumber deep the Indians lie,
Dreaming amongst their dogs of sport and chase,—
If only one of these I could have taught
To love Thee, I would feel my labors crowned
With benediction,—but no light from Heaven
Fell on the weary months that bring to-night
The eve of Christmas.

Yesterday they came

Back from the chase with empty hands and dark
Stern faces pinched with hunger, and they cried
To me that if my faith indeed were strong
To bring them food, they would believe and pray.
And so, with trembling heart, I sent them forth
This morn, and thought my supplication heard
When tall and dark against the sunset sky
I saw them stride towards me, dragging slow
A mighty moose across the reddened snow.
But soon, amidst the revelry, arose
Fresh jeers and insults, and again I knew
My hopes and prayers had ended in despair,—
My life in nothingness.

Now, fainter grown,
I ask my God if it is all in vain,
Shall I not teach one soul to worship Him?—
I, who have given all,—since in fair France,
Among the sunny slopes and purple vines
Of my dear home, I heard the Voice that called—
“Leave all thou hast, and come and follow Me.”
Ah, no!—my work is ended, for I feel
The icy hand of Death upon my heart,
And here, alone, amid a savage horde,
Must I, in storm and snow and wilderness,
Breathe my last sigh of effort unfulfilled,
Knowing that I have toiled and suffered long
In vain,—in vain. The hut grows cold and dark—
A mist is round me,—Lord, to Thee my soul!

And so, one night two hundred years ago,
An humble priest amongst our forests died,—
Swept suddenly from heights of sacrifice
As a light leaf that early trembles down,
Before the radiance of the autumn gold
Has crowned its days with glory. Yet we know
Nor life nor leaf is wasted, for the soil
Takes to its breast beneath the winter snows
Alike the lonely waif that fell too soon,
And the rich gifts the burning maple sheds
In glowing triumph of attained desire,—
Drawing from each, with subtle chemistry,
The blossoms sweet and starry buds of spring.
From many a nameless grave shall start and bloom
The flower of high resolve, and other hearts
Shall claim it theirs, and other hands shall grasp
And bear it through the tumult of the world,
A consecrated message from the dead,
Strong to inspire all noble deeds of men!

ACROSS THE GULF.

Where the great cataract, Niagara, fills
The air with clouds, the earth with shuddering sound,
A winding path leads to the utmost crag
And down the steep a narrow stair is flung
Confronting in its fragile nothingness
The world of hurling waters. There, alone,
A blind girl stands. As on the dizzy verge
Of Alpine heights a snow-drop half afraid
Hangs trembling petals o'er the dark abyss,
White robed she bends above the roaring gulf,
Clasping with timid hands the slender rail
That guards the deep descent. A pale sweet face
Turned towards the wonders that she cannot see,
And tremulous with passionate despair,
Half parted lips that in their tender curves
Droop mournfully, and heavy lashes wet
With unshed tears.

Before her sweeps

The crystal glory rounding from the rock
And melting into sunbeams as it falls.
A thousand changing tints of flashing dew
Strewn like a garland at Niagara's feet
Weave ever higher their mystic blossomings,
And higher still in showers of starry light
Till one wild leap flings to the farthest crag
Its vivid splendor, and across the foam
There glows a rainbow arch of victory!
But not for her the beauty or the power,
She hears the grand deep music, but her soul
Has vainly pictured the Unseen—oh, Fate,
Too cruel in thy gifts,—the self-same world
Holds blindness and Niagara!

And yet

We all are standing helpless on the brink
Where Reason totters and where Science falls,
For these our chosen guides have led us far
Down dark recesses of the misty past,
Through shadowy forms of dim and dawning life,
Back to the great First Cause,—a step—and then
We falter on the verge of the Unknown,—
The deep gulf yawns before us, we are blind.
But ever and anon across the gloom
We hear the waters of Eternity
Sounding mysterious music through the night,
And though we cannot see their endless sweep
The angel, Faith, is waiting by our side
If we but clasp her hand, to lead us on
To where the rainbow rests upon their foam—
The wondrous radiance of the smile of God.

ASPIRATIONS.

The bitterest griefs in solitude are borne,
The deepest wounds shrink from the careless eye,
The heart that perfidy has bruised and torn
In silence strives to hide its misery.
To lock within a rigid bound the sigh
That rises wildly from the tortured breast,
To force the hot, impetuous tear to dry
Before it fall, and quiet every grief repressed,
To meet the merry mocking world with smile and jest.

This hast thou borne, and yet,—thou wilt forget.
There lingers yet a sadder fate on earth,
A lifelong anguish and a dull regret
That mingles with our brightest hours of mirth,—
To know that deep within us there has birth
The germ of higher, nobler things, the power
To deeply, keenly feel the wondrous worth
Of what we might be, if but for an hour
The seed within our hearts could spring and flower
Into more perfect growth,—if our dull clay
But once with giant strength could cast aside
The laws of limitation which hold sway
Within us, and endowed with loftier pride
Resolve to do and dare, what'er betide,—
To link the melody of magic rhyme
To glowing thoughts unsung, and all untried
Win from the world that heritage sublime
Of fame that crowns the Immortals, Conquerors of Time!

Fond dreamer, murmur not,—it cannot be!
It is not thou alone has vainly sought
To give a voice to some fair fantasy,
To find expression for some burning thought

With deepest truth and wondrous beauty fraught.
Ah, in how many weary hearts there dwells
A ray of Heaven-sent inspiration caught
And prisoned there for ever!—silent cells,
Where even Death can find but frozen, mute farewells!

For realms of beauty spread before their eyes,
Bathed in the light of Fancy's golden beams,
A land of music and of wondrous dyes,
Of tender shadows and of sunset gleams,—
But when the fairy vision brightest seems
Dark mists from Lethe's wave obscure the air,
No trace remains to prove it aught but dreams,
No songs of triumph praise what once was fair,—
No sound,—but voiceless lips, sealed with a dumb despair.

Perchance thy nearest, dearest friend may live
A Poet, nobler than the world's acclaim
E'er greeted with the homage praises give,—
The humblest wand'rer without home or name
May bear within his breast as pure a flame
Of genius as e'er woke the golden lyre
Of bard renowned in halls of princely fame,—
No favoring air has fanned its fainting fire,
It lives o'ershadowed now,—in darkness will expire.

As the wild harp of the caressing wind
With silent strings awaits the breeze of night
To give forth all the music there enshrined,
But ever till the fairy fingers bright
Of Zephyr sweep its chords with touches light
Is mute and motionless,—so may it be
That when our spirits take their Heaven-ward flight
A Master hand to sweetest harmony
Will wake the Harp of Life's long hidden melody!

MIRAMAR.

When Nature lingering turned to gaze
On all her labours done,
And marked each marvel she had wrought
Of beauty 'neath the sun,
Ere to her hidden haunts withdrawn,
She paused to greet the golden dawn

At Miramar.

For every charm of land or sea
Her bounteous hand had given
To many climes, lay smiling there
Beneath a cloudless heaven,—
Her parting glance in radiance fell
On that sweet spot she loved so well,

Fair Miramar.

A sudden glory clad the hills,
The flowers bloomed anew,
The waves leaped flashing to the shore,
As soft she breathed adieu,—
Yet once again she turned,—“Ah, no,
From thy delights I cannot go,

Dear Miramar.”

So we may seek through many lands
Her foot-prints day by day,
And worship at a thousand shrines
The magic of her sway,
But trace her presence where we will,
Her sweetest smile is lingering still

On Miramar!

A FAIRY TALE.

“Once upon a time”—thus read the maiden—
“A Fairy Prince came o’er the hills to woo,
Swiftly he rode with loving thoughts and tender”—
“So I” her lover murmured, “think of you.”

“And then” her sweet voice faltered, “as he journeyed
Deep sleep fell o’er his eyes of darkest blue,
And in his dreams his Lady stood before him”—
“So I” her lover whispered, “dream of you.”

“And then the fairies”—but she could not utter
Another word of that sweet tale of old,
The book is gently drawn from snowy fingers
But yet a newer story is not told.

Only the same in other language spoken,
And he the Knight, she Lady of his quest,
Across the hills of Silence he hath found her,
And now he prayeth—“Darling, tell the rest.”

“And so they lived”—her head is drooping lower,
“Happy”—he cried, and clasped her where they stand,
“Ever”—she breathed with one shy look above her,—
The “afterwards” was hushed—in Fairy-land!

NIGHT.

Through brooding shadows of the tranquil hours
When Nature wraps the world in gentle sleep,
I wander thro' the sweet, dew-laden flowers
In a deserted garden, hidden deep
Within the bounds of forest solitude,
And wild with clust'ring ferns and tangled bloom,—
Too fair a scene for melancholy mood,
Save when Night comes with peace and tender gloom.

Now flowers that all too brightly blow by day,
Veiled by the moon's pale radiance, softer shine,
As noble spirits spoiled by Fortune's ray,
Shed purer light when Fortune's beams decline.
The night's dim magic throws a holier spell
O'er roses glowing red with passion's hue,
And wakes a soul within the lily's bell
That trembles into life in tears of dew.

The babbling brook that chattered thro' the noon,
Falls faintly now in murmurs soft and low,
And tiny ripples mirror the great moon
Enthroned above them in her clouds of snow.
Each dewy leaf is tremulous with light
When fitfully the fragrant air is stirred,
And slowly sinking through the silent night
Falls dreamy chirp of happy nested bird.

Yet deep within the music of the stream,
Fast folded in the petals of the rose,
Hidden within the moonlight's mystic beam,
A spirit dwells in tranced, sweet repose,—
A spirit of wild passionate unrest,
Strong to arise in its despairing might.

Sleeps in all nature, sleeps within my breast,
Stilled by the peaceful shadows of the night.

The morn will come, this hour of dreams and prayer
But calms the sorrow it can not beguile,
Another day will dawn, the golden air
Quiver in radiance 'neath the sun-god's smile,
The flowers will glow, the waters dance again,
The wild bird sing its triumph to the skies,—
And my sad heart will wake to know its pain,
The burden it must bear until it dies.

DAWN.

When dawn first breaks through darkness deep,
From struggling vapors born,
And softly steal o'er flowers asleep
The first pure rays of morn,
We know that soon the glory bright
Will sweep all shades away
As the sun-god springs in his glowing might
Up the blue of the perfect day.
Oh, doubting heart! while you repine,
The dreary night is past,—
Look up! the heavens with splendor shine,
The dawn is here at last!

SWEET WIND OF EVE.

(Translation of the French Romance "Brise du Soir.")

Sweet wind of eve! around my window playing,
With blue forget-me-nots and roses crimson blown,
Oh fragrant flutt'ring breeze! perchance amid thy straying
Thou'lt wander where my dreams, my fonder thoughts are flown!

Sweet wind of eve! oh may thy soft caresses,
Thy purest sighs of love still breathe around her there,
On her fair neck of snow unroll her shining tresses,
And happy, faint and die, amid her golden hair.

Sweet wind of eve! oh whisper to her sleeping
In murm'ring music low, thy dreamy melody,
While I, in tears and prayers, my lonely vigil keeping,
In darkness kneel, and sing of her so far from me.

BRISE DU SOIR.

Brise du soir! qui viens sur ma fenêtre
 Bercer mes résédas et mes rosiers en fleur,
Brise errante du soir! tu passeras peut-être
 Où vont tons mes soupirs, les rêves de mon cœur.

Brise du soir! que ta plus douce haleine,
 Ton souffle le plus pur et le plus amoureux,
S'épuise a soulever et déroule avec peine,
 Sur son cou libre et nu, l'or de ses blonds cheveux.

Brise du soir! murmure à son oreille,
 Pourd l'endormir, tes bruits, tes concerts les plus doux,
Tandisque dans les pleurs, en priant, moi je veille,
 Et chante dans la nuit, seul, loin d'elle à genoux.

NINON.
(Translated for Tosti's music.)

Ninon, Ninon, the hours are swiftly flying,
The moments pass and day still follows day,
Roses will die when autumn winds are sighing,
How canst thou live and love not, Ninon, say?

To cross life's stormy sea, Ninon, dost thou not fear?
Ah, never a star hast thou to guide thee or to cheer,—
No music sounds for thee above the tempest's roar,—
Thou who hast never loved, canst venture more?
Oh! I would venture all for Love's bright crown of glory,
Or, unloved,—cry aloud for Death to end the story, to end the story!

Ninon, Ninon, the hours are swiftly flying,
The moments pass and day still follows day,
Roses will die when autumn winds are sighing,
How canst thou live and love not, Ninon, say?

What though the hour of rapture sweet returneth never!
Thou has lived, thou hast loved,—Love endureth for ever!
Thou has lived, thou has loved, Love endureth for ever!

Ninon, Ninon, what is thy fate to be?
How canst thou live, since Love dwells not with thee?

IN MEMORIAM.

The summer clouds drift softly through the night,
And in the early dawn their pearly gleams
Flush pink and crimson in the coming light,

But when above the distant purple hills
The first clear ray of piercing splendor streams,
And the wide sky with instant glory fills,—

The faint clouds melt into the golden air,
The tender, floating hues forever lost
Vanish like dreams that fly we know not where.

So while this earthly night around us lies,
And we like shadowy vapors idly tossed
In the dim dawn across the changing skies

Drift thro' the world as fleeting as the clouds
That in the wind-swept heavens come and go,—
Torn in despair, or wrapped in stormy shrouds,

Rosy with hope, or grey with grief of years,
In manhood's purple or in childhood's snow,
Glowing with joy, or saddening into tears,—

Across our wayward path a piercing ray
Flashed from the sword of Azrael, sudden gleams,
And like the mists of morn we melt away.

Yet when a good man dies, not all in vain
He silent fades from earthly hopes and dreams,
For as the laden cloud dissolves in rain

And gently freshens every fainting flower.

So by his death a thousand memories live,
And those he loved and taught in youth's brief hour

Guard deep within their hearts the words of truth,
The noblest counsels man to man can give,
The pearl of faith, the innocence of youth,

Because he lived and died,—than this no praise
Rings louder through the vault of Heaven above.
No warrior falling, crowned with victor's bays,

No purpled monarch spreading conquest wide,
No poet singing of a deathless love,
No patriot worthy of his country's pride

Can win a loftier heritage of fame
Than he who when he leaves this earthly sphere
Leaves it a better world because he came,—

And this the noblest tribute we can pay
The memory we love and all revere—
Through him our hearts are nearer God to-day.

ACHIEVEMENT.

“To-day,” the statesman said, “the cause is won,”—
But rival cheers ring out ere set of sun.

“At last,” the soldier shouts, “Fame’s guerdon sweet
Is mine,”—he lies beneath the victor’s feet.

“No fate,” the lover breathes, “can part us now,”—
Cold is the kiss of Death upon her brow.

“Oh, joy,” the sailor cries, “my native land!”—
The storm waves dash him lifeless on the strand.

“True hearts,” the monarch said, “uphold my throne,”—
He pines in exile, friendless and alone.

“Hearken,” the poet sings, “a truth sublime!”—
The people’s plaudits crown a jester’s rhyme.

“I sway the world,” said he of wealth untold,
His slaves the souls of men, his idol gold.

“Let fools toil on, I climb to power and state,”—
He falls, the victim of a madman’s hate.

So through the ages still vain mortals press,
Striving to grasp the glittering prize, success,

Or seeking in the dust that flower divine
True happiness, which never there shall shine.

He aims too low, his dreams too humbly range,
Whose triumphs Death can mar, or Time can change.

“Farewell,” said one,—men deemed his life obscure,
And mocked his simple faith and conscience pure,

“Farewell to earth,” and smiled as Death drew near
Bearing the meed of all his labours here,

Victory to him who fought through evil days,
Fame to the faithful, to the toiler praise,—

The fair fulfilment of each vision bright
Whose radiance led him upward through the night,

The beauty that in Nature’s smile he sought,
The truth he worshipped in his inmost thought,—

All these, mysterious Angel, thou hast given
To him whose soul in exile sighed for Heaven!

Who dares the world despise and guards apart
The flower of love divine within his heart,

Yet closes not his ears to that great cry
Sent up by suffering millions to the sky,

But stoops to raise his brother bowed with care,
Binds up his wounds and saves him from despair,—

He conquering Self, shall know, the conflict past,
All Joy, all Love; all Glory his at last!

THE WINTER'S QUEEN.

She stands amidst the forests old and hoary
Looking with steadfast eyes across the sea,
A fair and haughty maiden, with the glory
Of buoyant hope and stainless majesty;
Pure as the bridal robes around her thrown,
Since Winter proudly claimed her as his own.

In vain the bright young Spring in accents tender
Whisper'd low words of sweet and dawning love
Shower'd around her gleams of fitful splendor,
And bade a clearer azure shine above,
Hung sparkling dewdrops on her tresses bright,
And fring'd her robe with globes of liquid light;

In vain he wove sweet wreaths of beauty peerless,
Of rare pale blossoms ting'd with faintest flush;
Her radiant eyes still shone undimm'd and fearless
Not all his gifts could wake one fleeting blush.
A tender smile she gave his sad farewell,—
He whom she loves must weave a stronger spell!

Then Summer came with fragrant, glowing treasure
And flung his crimson roses at her feet,
In dreamy music breath'd of joy and pleasure,
And steeped the golden air in languor sweet,—
Yet through the subtle spell, the soft disguise,
Impatient lightnings swept the sultry skies.

Silent she listened to her lover's pleading
Now sweet and low, now wild and tempest torn,
Her calm pure eyes gazed on serene, unheeding
The lesser love she could not choose but scorn,—
Far above Passion's storms that darken o'er

He whom she loves must dwell for evermore!

The warrior Autumn came in buckler shining,
 Bearing rich spoil of many a conquered field,
Ripe ruddy fruit with crimson ivy twining
 Luxuriant piled on his uplifted shield,
Great purple clusters in profusion massed,
And glowing sumach garlands round them cast.

He shed a golden mist of tender meaning
 Around the loveliness it could not hide,
And through the sunset haze majestic leaning
 Crowned her with maple leaves a royal bride,
The gift is dear, yet she his prayer denies,—
He whom she loves must bring a nobler prize!

But ere the Autumn roused from golden dreaming
 Had breathed his last sad sob of wild despair,
There came a knight in silver armor gleaming
 With azure eyes like depths of cloudless air,
Fast fled his foes before the sword he drew,
Glistening with gems and pearly with frozen dew.

A snowy veil he wrought with touches tender
 To shield her from the Storm-King's frosty breath,
Wove her a wreath of pale auroral splendor,
 And whispered "Mine the love that conquers death."
Oh, stainless Knight! true, steadfast and serene,—
Fair Canada is crowned the Winter's Queen!

PROLOGUE.

(WRITTEN FOR AN AMATEUR PERFORMANCE.)

To each and all a merry Christmas-tide!
A bright New Year, and all you wish beside!
We welcome with these words of joyous cheer
Old friends and new, so kindly gathered here.
Yet for a moment, ere the play begin,
Your kind indulgence we would seek to win,—
Remember, 'tis no troupe of practised art,
Playing with ease each oft-repeated part,—
For the first time our 'prentice hands we try
In public,—'tis no wonder we are shy!

Yet we have aimed at no ambitious height,
No tragic story moves your tears to-night,
No dark sensation will your fears engage,
No murdered spectre stalks across our stage,—
Leaving the drama's rich and solid fare
We give but dainty trifles, light as air,
Pâtés of puns, bonbons of repartee,
A slight repast of farce and comedy.

But still to please you is not all our task,
On higher grounds your patronage we ask,—
To help the poor your gen'rous aid is given,
And Charity can link this earth to Heaven!
Then courage! we'll not dread the critics' eyes,
For noble aims wake noble sympathies,
We cannot fail,—we act in Mercy's cause,
We claim your kindness,—grant us your applause!

THE SPIRIT OF THE CARNIVAL.

Onward! the people shouted,
Let merriment be king!
Fling out your crimson banners,
Your fragrant roses fling,—
Fly faster, maddened horses,
Through din of trumpets loud,
Crash down the dusty Corso,
Cheered by the frantic crowd.

Sweep onward, gaudy pageant,
In wild uproarious glee,
Dark goblins, elves fantastic,
Strange shapes from land and sea,
Wave high the flaming torches!
Clang loud the brazen bells!
The great enchanter, Carnival,
Hath Rome within his spells.

Weary of heat and clamour
A young Italian lay
Beneath the ilex shadow,
When closed the burning day,
Faint as his faded garlands
His drowsy eyelids seem,—
The Spirit of the Carnival
Comes to him in his dream:

“Awake, oh youth, arouse thee
And follow where I lead,
I know thy ardent nature,
Thy soul is strong indeed,
It loathes the gilded folly,
The childish pranks and play.

The weak excited populace
Wild with a holiday.

And here, indeed, I linger
To laugh and jest awhile,
But as a king may pause to greet
A wilful beauty's smile,
Yet guardeth ever in his heart
An image pure and fair,
And hastening homeward to his queen
Find life and love are there.

So follow, follow, where I lead,
Across the western sea,
Where thou shalt learn thy manhood's might
From farce and folly free.”
The youth sighed in his sleep—his soul
Obeyed the strange command—
The great enchanter, Carnival,
Still led him by the hand.

And soon the groves of olives
Are fading from his sight,
The dim blue shores of Italy
Melt into deeper night;
Fresh draughts of life inhaling,
Where northern breezes blow,
Vast regions lie before him,
All white with frost and snow.

“Behold!” th' enchanter whispered,
“Gaze on and thou shalt see,
Why Canada, my kingdom,
My chosen home should be;
Here all my sports and merriment,
To noble ends allied,
Teach manly strength and fortitude,

A nation's truest pride.

See! like a jewel burning
Upon a silver band
Fair Montreal is shining
Upon the snowy land;
Its stately mansions glowing
With hospitable cheer,
The merry sleigh-bells ringing,
Re-echo far and near.

The city keeps high festival,
The icy air, like wine
Quickens each pulse to bounding glee,
Bright eyes with gladness shine.
With merry laughter following fast
From countless summits high,
Like flashing arrows from a bow,
The swift toboggans fly.”

Then, as the youth gazed on, he sees
A fairy palace rise,
Seeming of mist and moonbeams born,
Or poet's fantasies,
Within it throbs a soul of fire,
That glows through every part,
Softly as shines the light of love
Within a maiden's heart.

A moment, and the magic scene
Grows strangely bright as day,
For, see! an army storms the fort,—
Oh, guard it while ye may!
Hurrah! the rockets leap aloft,
The waving torches flare—
A rainbow shower of golden stars
Breaks into glory there!

And far on yonder mountain side
A chain of living light!
Each link a son of Canada
With torch that blazes bright,—
A jewelled order proudly flung
On old Mount Royal's breast,
A starry circlet from the skies
Dropt on his snowy crest.

Then lights and city faded
And the dreamer woke at last,
O'er him hung the old-world languor,
Faint with mem'ries of the past;
But his spirit glowed within him,
And he left the careless throng,
Lived and wrought in earnest fashion,
Toil or pastime, brave and strong.

So may faint hearts ever gather
From Canadian sports and play
Something of the force that, working,
Hewed the forests, cleared the way:
For the tree shows fairer blossom
Where the roots are wide and deep,
And the pleasure turns to glory,
When the victors revels keep:

And Carnival no longer wears
The bells as Fancy's Fool,—
He is a King, whose subjects free
Are loyal to his rule;
Each merry heart beats true and fast,
And knows, amid his play,
To-morrow he can meet the foe
Who tries his strength to-day.

Then guard it well, fair Canada,
Thy festival of snow,
Proving old winter, stern and grim,
Thy friend and not thy foe;
And may thy sons build steadfastly
A nation great and free,
Whose vast foundations stretch abroad
From mighty sea to sea.

Long may Canadians bear thy name
In unity and pride,—
Their progress, like thy rushing streams,
Roll a resistless tide;
Their hearts be tender as the flowers
That o'er thy valleys grow,
Their courage rugged as thy frost
When winds of winter blow,
Their honour brilliant as thy skies
And stainless as thy snow!

SONG OF THE ST. LAWRENCE.

Deep in the silent forest shades or caverns dark as night
A thousand streams steal into life like threads of silver light,—
No birth obscure from trickling springs my shining waters know,
Soft cradled on the royal breast of broad Ontario.

From mighty lakes my spirit takes its freedom and its power,
And wondrous gifts of beauty rare are mine by right and dower,
Crowned with a heritage sublime my billows proudly roll,
The noblest river earth can show from frozen pole to pole!

For sweetly may the Danube flow by city, bridge, and town,
And calm by ancient castled crags the Rhine go winding down,
And slowly glide o'er shallows wide the Mississippi's stream,
And flash the rushing Amazon where the jungle flowers gleam,—

But mingling in my breast I bear in triumph to the sea
The majesty and strength I drew from Huron grand and free,
The wild blue waves of Erie, and Niagara's shining spray,
And the smile of bright Ontario beneath the morning ray.

And strewn like sparkling jewels upon me as I glide,
A thousand fairy isles are softly mirrored in my tide,
And the foam of rushing rapids weaves a pearly veil of mist
To cool my glowing waters that the summer sun has kissed.

Then onward calmly flowing and widening evermore
Till dim Laurentian mountains keep guard upon my shore,
Where the cold salt breath of Ocean speeds the seagull on his way
To meet thy gloomy surges, mysterious Saguenay!

There all around me murmurs of the mighty past arise,
The sound of vast upheavals and the strange discordant cries
Of beast and bird departed. and the groans of riven rocks

That in thunder fall asunder beneath the earthquake's shocks.

Oh, Canada! the omen take to cheer thee on thy way,
And spur thy noblest efforts to lead the van to-day,—
First born from fiery chaos in Nature's awful throes,
First heralds of the nations thy mountain peaks arose!

And Science from these solitudes can win in triumph now
Rare jewels for a birthright to bind upon thy brow,
Deep in whose lustre glimmers still through ages that have been
Dim wondrous forms of dawning life, as fragile as a dream.

So mayest thou stand forever in Freedom's holy light,
The first to conquer error and the first to guard the right;
Through all the centuries to come I see thy glory shine
Clear in the calm fulfilment of a destiny divine.

The sails that gleam upon my tide will teach the world to know
The flag of Canada where'er the winds of heaven blow,
And as the olive branch that once the dove of promise bore,
So shall the Maple Leaf be hailed on many a distant shore.

And proudly still beside thee shall my crystal waters roll,
Bearing rich freights of garnered wealth on to their distant goal,
The overflowing plenty of thy prairies' golden grain,
To give the weary nations fresh heart and hope again.

But now while softly lingering around my sunny isles,
I dream of what thy fate shall be and ripple into smiles;
For deep within the glowing hues reflected in my breast
I see the glorious future of the land I love the best.

From these clear depths the lily buds in sudden radiance start,—
So shall the flower of Genius awake within thy heart,
And when its snowy leaves unfold in majesty serene,
Art shall enshrine thy beauty, and thy Poets crown thee Queen!

And countless millions of thy sons shall shower at thy feet
Rich gifts of love and laurels, but my voice is low and sweet.
Fair Canada, my Song is thine, and long as Time shall be,
My waters murmuring thy name shall glide unto the sea!

THE TAY BRIDGE.

On through the storm! the rushing, swaying train
Chased by the demon winds and mad with fear,
Up to the cold white moon that will not hear
Sends shrieks of pity as it flies in pain.
On through the night! the iron sinews strain,
Freighted with human lives,—the Frith is near,
And in the tempest surging wild and drear
The wind-swept waters warning shout in vain.
On to the Bridge! the giant girders groan
They tremble,—fall!—then under the wide sky
No trace of aught but ruin, and the moan
Of waves that roll o'er death and agony.
Bright hopes! fair dreams!—was it for this alone
Ye blossomed in the hearts that silent lie?

IMPRISONED.

Within, a panic stricken throng
That sadden fear appalls,
In blindest fury crashing close
Wide doors to rigid walls,
A wild fierce struggle, life or death,
Each holding ground with gasping breath
Until the weaker falls,—
Each inch of room a battle field
Where one exults and one must yield.

Without, the boundless earth and air,
The depths of starry space,
Vast oceans that the strong white moon
Uplifts to her embrace,
Free winds of heaven blowing light,
Far planets wheeling through the night
To their appointed place,—
Marvels unseen to captives there,
Imprisoned by their own despair.
Within the gloomy walls of Doubt
Fierce factions wage their war,
Fair Hope lies slain where they have set
Negation's iron bar,—
Pent in their narrow bounds they cry,
"No stars, no sky,—we struggle, die,
And know not why we are."
Oh, self-immured!—ye cannot see?
Stand back!—your brother shall be free.
Stand back!—from 'neath your trampling feet
The young, the weak shall rise,
Their white lips breathe in silent pain
The prayer your pride denies,
Their pale hands clasp the faded flowers

Of Faith that bloomed in happier hours
Beneath their childhood's skies—
Oh, still for these within your walls
May Justice, Truth and Self-control
Set wide the gateways of the soul
To where, beyond, God's glory calls
Man's spirit to its goal!

THE VALLEY OF TIME.

LINES WRITTEN FOR THE QUEEN'S JUBILEE.

Far away in the desolate valley where Time holds his court as a king,
Where cometh no changing of seasons, no glory or gladness of spring,
Entranced in a motionless slumber, apart from all laughter or tears,
Low at the feet of their captor lie fettered the fugitive Years.
From the haunts of the children of men he bore them in triumph away,
All in vain were the tears that besought, the voices that called them to stay,—
The dull grey mist of the past drifted over them heavy and chill,
And strewn like the leaves of the forest the Years lie withered and still.

But now on the far mountain heights where the twilight of centuries fled,
Dwells on the dim pallid snows like a veil on the face of the dead,
There cometh a flush as of morning where never a sunrise was seen,
On the cold grey peaks of Oblivion, the tombs of the years that have been;
And far in the distance a sound as of music that thrills and that sighs,
Soft strains and sweet voices that linger and melt in the brightening skies,—
Oh, Conqueror! tremble and see,—for reflected in glory above
Is a light from the realms of mortals, from kingdoms of life and of love!

And still on the cloud-circled summit the radiance gathers and glows,
And flushes from pink into crimson, like the heart of an opening rose;
And nearer the music is pealing, till a burst of tumultuous sound
Rolls over the crest of the mountain, and scatters its echoes around,
And a ray piercing down like a sword through the mists that have lingered so
long,

The dark shadows are broken by sun-light, the silence of ages by song;
Hidden deep is the Valley of Time, but strong is the spirit of Man,
When the joy of a nation breaks forth he may fly from its triumph who can!

Awaken, arise from your slumbers, oh Years that have vanished away,
Come forth from your desolate prison to the light and the laughter of day,
One by one you have left us, and borne to your valley afar

The sounds of jubilee music, and the thrills of jubilee music

Ine records of glorious peace, and the trophies of glorious war,
Time has enthralled you with chains, but to-day they are fetters of flowers,
Break them and rise in your strength, we call you and claim you as ours,—
We call you in chorus exulting that girdles the earth with acclaim,
The trumpet tongued voices of nations that herald Victoria's fame!

Fifty times in the fair English meadows the cowslips have blossomed and died
Since she first with the grace of a Queen cast the fears of a maiden aside,—
Oh, you who once knew her and loved her through innocent childhood and
youth,

Who in turn led her onward and upward in pathways of virtue and truth,
Look afar!—on a thousand hills is her Jubilee banner unfurled,—
Awaken, oh hearts that once beat with the rhythmical pulse of the world!
Immortal as gods in your youth you shall live though the centuries die,
For Freedom you brought us, and Fame, and the spirit of Love from on high.

Victoria! the spell of thy name has compassed a marvel unknown,
The chains of the tyrant are broken, the might of his power o'er-thrown,—
Thine are the wakening Years that upspringing in splendor arise,
With the past and its story reflected in the light of their luminous eyes,
Again in these magical mirrors thy life as a dream glideth by,
A vision of glorious empire that widens to every sky,
A reign of all womanly virtue, a court of a stainless fame,
And countless records of duty done for the honour of England's name!

Again through the dim purple shadows, the Minster's great arches and nave
The anthem triumphant is pealing, the banners of chivalry wave,
There our allegiance we vowed thee in the light of thy fair girlhood's grace,
Thine, oh, Queen maiden anointed, were the scepter and crown of our race.
Then forth from the rapturous heights where Love lingered with thee hand in
hand

There flashed a clear radiance of joy that in sunshine illumined the land,
Smiled the bright promise of spring-time and the autumn with golden increase,
Smiled happy millions contented in the light of a prosperous peace.

But when o'er the distant horizon there rolled from the darkness afar
The storm-clouds of gathering thunder, the flame and the fury of war,
When the snows of Russia were reddened with the blood that our veterans

WHEN THE SHOWS OF RUSSIA WERE REDDED WITH THE BLOOD THAT OUR VETERANS
gave,

Or deep in the Indian jungle our sons found a warrior's grave,
Then the balm of thy pity in healing fell soft on a nation's despair,
The desolate widows and orphans blessed thy name in their woe-stricken
prayer,

Thy sympathy wakened the love that has guarded and sheltered thy throne
Since thy people, drawn closer in sorrow, wept for thee in thy grief as their
own.

Yet through shadows the sunlight has broken, the years in their swift-passing
tread

Have brought thee as gallant defenders as sleep with the glorious dead,
Thy soldiers are foremost in battle, thy ships are abroad on the seas,
And Victory follows the flag that spreads the red cross to the breeze!
But nobler the triumphs of Truth as the years have drawn closer to right,
Art has enshrined them forever, and Science has crowned them with light,—
Slowly the dark clouds have scattered, brighter grows the clear dawn of the
day

When Man, in uplifting his brother, shall subject all things to his sway.

For the universe baffled his will with legions of forces unknown,
Dumb laws that in darkness lay hid, yet surrounded and claimed him their own,
Till he rose in his manhood and cried out in anguish to earth and to sky,
“Come forth, mighty powers unseen, I will fight ye and conquer, or die!”
A child's puny hand against Titans! yet despairing he struggled and fought
Till at last from the crash of the conflict flew a spark of electrical thought,—
The Idea leaped forth from the brain, full armed as when Wisdom began,
And the forces of Nature were chained like slaves to the chariot of Man!

These the fair first-fruits of Freedom—the gold of the ripening field,
The progress that builds upon Science, the peace that with honour is sealed,
The mercy that raiseth the lowly, the justice that seeks but the Right,
The dawn of a glorious morrow when the nations of earth shall unite.
Victoria! may these be thy dower from every country and clime,
From lands where beneath the old banner the joy-bells of jubilee chime,
In our strength we are standing alone, yet, if menace or danger be near,
Oh mother and Empress of Nations—one call and thy children are here!

Oh, Mother and Empress of Nations, — she can, and thy children are here:

With the radiance that slept on her snows shining now on her flowers of May,
Comes Canada, fairest of all, with a gift for thy festival day,—
She brings thee a chain that can bind the East to the lands of the West,
And linking the nations together, lays the circlet of gems on thy breast,—
There the diamond, Australia, sparkles by the topaz from Africa's stream,
There thy soft southern islands like opals in circles of sapphire gleam,
There burns the rich ruby of India,—they shall never be parted again,
While amongst the Immortals are shining the Years of Victoria's reign!

A WELCOME TO MONTREAL. LORD DUFFERIN.

A thousand welcomes thine! from every heart
That beats in joy to greet thee, every hand
That fain would clasp thine own, from every tongue
Whose warmest accents praise thy noble name.
A welcome from the rich, who vie in turn
Who shall most honor him whom all proclaim
Most generous of hosts and true of friends.
A welcome from the hardy sons of toil,
Who know that all thy kindly sympathies
Still widen as they fall on lowly lives,—
A welcome from our city's myriad homes,
From mart and street, from childhood's merry tones,
And hearty cheers of rough and honest men.
A welcome sweet from girlhood's happy eyes,
From weary poets whom thy words have stirred,
From artists, spurred by thee to loftier aims,
From statesmen, taught to rise from petty strife
To the pure air of justice and of truth,
From orators, who heard thy voice and sprang
To catch the swift spark of a fleeting fame
From thy bright torch of glowing eloquence.
And not alone from these,—fair Nature's self,
Who heard thy accents in the distant north
Depict in noble words her wondrous wealth
Of beauty spread through all our favored land,—
The forests deep, the chains of silver lakes,
The boundless plains that melt into the west,
The thousand cascades leaping from their crags,
The winding courses of her mighty streams
From rocky shore to shore,—to thee in turn
Fit tribute pays. Strewn on Mount Royal's crest

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Her purest snow wreaths lie in dazzling white,
The stately pines, her faithful sentinels,
Lift leafy spears against a sapphire sky,
And, far below, the frozen river shines,
Sparkling with diamonds that her hand has flung
To blaze before thee,—but her treasures bright
Grow dim beside the radiance of the gift
Canadian hearts now offer thee and thine—
The priceless jewel of a Nation's love!

EAGLE PASS.

[Eagle Pass, on the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, was accidentally discovered (after a long and fruitless search for an opening in the mountains) by one of the surveying party who was out shooting. He saw and followed an eagle that suddenly disappeared, and on investigation a ravine was found, which has since become known as Eagle Pass.]

“There is no Pass,” he said dismayed,
As still through hours of toil they found
Each side the valley’s solemn shade
The mighty mountains close them round.

“A thousand sentries guard the keep
Of Nature’s fortress, towering high,
From granite wall and frowning steep
They sternly bid us halt, or die!

Our labour vain—no human art
Can pierce these ramparts, let us go.”
Thus spoke the Chief, and sad at heart
They turned with sullen steps and slow.

A wind exultant swept the glen,
The pine-trees’ giant branches threw
Behind the weary, baffled men
Strange mocking gestures of adieu.

Above, from peak to peak there gleamed
The signal fires of victory won,
And from the highest summit streamed
The crimson banners of the sun;

Defiant rose each height sublime,

For who is Man that he should dare
To storm the citadels of Time,
And plant his puny standard there?

And softly fell the solemn night
O'er purple hills and forests grey,
Save where the glaciers' cold blue light
Caught the last spark of dying day.

Below, the brooding twilight slept,
And downward through the darkening trail
The little band in silence crept
Through shadows of the lonely vale.

An Empire's hope, a Nation's dream,
Imperilled by their fruitless quest,—
About the camp-fire's ruddy gleam
That night was hushed the song and jest.

Soon slumber sealed the weary eyes
Of all save one who watched for day:
At morn in search of sport he tries
Each well-known path, each winding way.

With careless glance, in idle mood,
He marks the spot an eagle rose,
Then plunging deeper in the wood
He follows o'er the trackless snows.

On speeds the bird—but see! his flight
Blocked by yon dark and rugged wall,
He soars,—then vanishes from sight,—
Loud rings the hunter's joyful call!

The cliffs divide—a deep ravine
Pierces the mountain's hoary breast,
The shining valley curves between,

A sun-lit pathway to the West!

He stands entranced in rapture deep—
In dreams his dazzled eyes can see
The great imperial Highway sweep
Across the land from sea to sea!

“There is no Pass,” I sadly said,
“Beyond this Sorrow, mountain high,
Whose gloomy walls of doubt and dread
Rise up between me and the sky.

And yet, perchance, for me there waits
Life’s evening glow of peace and rest,
If I could only find the gates
That open to the golden West!”

There came a voice that whispered low,
“Take courage still if Hope be done,
And thy swift feet no longer go
In gladness towards the setting sun,—

If joy be hidden from thine eyes,
Shut out by griefs thou canst not scale,
Still hast thou Faith! behold she flies
Before thee through the lonely vale.

Oh, follow, follow where she leads,
Unheeding earthly blame or praise,
The clamour of the warring creeds,
The gathering clouds, the thorny ways.

The shadows fall, the night is here,—
Fear not, above thee still she springs,
Her radiant path undimmed and clear,

The light of Heaven upon her wings!

And if against thy sorrow's height
Hurled by the sad, relentless years,
One day she vanish from thy sight,
Enshrouded in a mist of tears,

Oh, follow still the lingering gleam
That cleft the darkness as it passed,—
The golden gateways of thy dream
Shall open wide for thee at last!”

RONDEAU.
“MY ROSES BLOOM.”

“My roses bloom”—Columbia cries,
“No more beneath the winter skies!”
As now in snowy raiment dressed,
In playful mood, yet half distressed,
Her elder sister’s robe she tries;

“I know not in this cold disguise
My glowing youth and strength,” she sighs
“No more by blue Pacific’s breast
My roses bloom.”

Above, the soaring peak replies,
“Weep not, nor dim thy radiant eyes,
I still must wear my snowy crest,
But thou, the flowers thou lovest best.
Cast off thy veil!—in sweet surprise
Thy roses bloom!”

DE PROFUNDIS.

Into the silence of the vast unknown
From tender care a life beloved has passed,
And those who watched now stand around the bier
Where one is kneeling, faithful to the last.
As in a dream she hears them,—“Life is fled,
Let us go hence, alas, now she is dead,
Of what avail thy prayer?

For this thy dear one hast thou prayed till now,
But when the spirit goeth forth alone
Into the land of shadows thou must leave
Its welfare then to Heaven,—seek thine own.
Thy love was strong to guard from earthly gloom,
It cannot pierce the darkness of the tomb,
God will not hear thy prayer.

For while thou asked that she might be forgiven
If she had erred in aught, the summons came,
Victorious Death has swept thy words from Heaven,
Thy duty once has now become thy blame,—
‘Peace to her soul’ to whisper now is sin,
The gates have closed where she has entered in
Against thee and thy prayer.

Then say farewell, thou canst do nothing more,
Thy grief is useless and thy pleadings vain.”
They turned away, but she who knelt beside
Bowed low her head and murmured yet again,—
“Oh, God! I cannot follow,—cannot see,
Send Thou to guard and guide her home to Thee
Thine angels, Love and Prayer.

For rising from the depths of human tears

As shining mists from oceans drawn unseen,
Thy mercy as a golden cloud enfolds
Earth, Heaven, and shadowy space that lies between.
Oh, dearest one! though now we are apart
Through God I reach thee, wheresoe'er thou art,
And He will hear my prayer.”

A VOICE FROM THE WEST.

In dreams I watched the Century grow old,
And saw as in a vision his last years
Whose sunset glow should smile upon the world
Sink into deepest gloom, his crown of fame
Darkened by stains of anarchy and crime,
And stained by mist of tears,—his gathered wealth,
The secrets hardly won from Nature's store,
Torn from his trembling hands to teach mankind
The arts of deadlier warfare, fiercer hate.
And while I gazed the nations drawn apart
Each in its serried line of battle stood
And wrapped in brooding silence, waited still
No sight of wrong or stern oppression stirred
Their mute array, but ever and anon
A clamor rang in the great market-place
Where the world's traders met to cry their wares,
And when the sound of jarring strife arose
The sullen ranks drew closer, as the clouds
Grow darker in the muttering of the storm.

Yet while the armed millions waiting stood
In trained idleness, the earth lay bare
Of fruitful increase, and the people pined
In helpless hunger and the stress of woe.
Strange wailing voices filled the murky air
Above the crowded cities, there below
The prisoners of poverty were chained
In helpless bondage, pent in loathsome dens.—
Men, women, children toiling strove to live
That they might gain a little space to die
And piercing deeper through th'encircling gloom
I saw the hidden haunts where crime is born
Of want and miserv.—where in frenzied hate

Men pale with passion clutch the murd'rous bomb,
And women slay the babes upon their breasts
That they may never know life's cruelty.

“Oh, God!” I cried, “is there no help, no hand
To lift thy children from these depths of woe?
Behold the Century is old and grey,
And we have mocked him, tottering to his doom.
False are the laurels on his wrinkled brow
That boast of freedom and of progress won,—
There is no freedom while these suffer wrong,
No progress while they sink in dark despair.
Oh, let him not take with him when he goes
The records of our deep, undying shame,
The story of our great achievements gained
At cost of human lives, our secrets wrung
From Nature but to smooth the gilded path
Of luxury with new and strange device,
But useless all to guide, to find a way
To rescue these, Thy children. Time is old,
And nothing, nothing done to prove us men
Who love their brethern as Thou didst command.”
I ceased, I could not speak for tears,—and still
I saw the nations ranged for deadly strife
Beneath the pall of Death.

But while I watched
The moaning voices dropped and died away,
The air grew strangely still,—the setting sun
Gleamed luridly through vapors that were pale
And ominous with fear.

Sudden a breath,
A strong fresh breeze from shining shores afar
Swept swift across the world. The clouds rolled back,
And all the nations, wondering, turned to gaze.
There on the utmost verge of that new land

Whose bounds of empire are alone restrained
By mighty oceans, rose a radiant form
Upspringing from the distant heights that hid
Her resting-place beside the Western sea.
A veil of mist blown from her sun-bright brow
Melted among the mountain peaks that stood
Guarding her presence, and her deep eyes shone
With joy at her awakening,—in their light
The watchers saw revealed a dawn of hope,
A dream of possibilities untold,
That woke a thrill of gladness once again
In hearts grown old with grief.

But as I gazed

Entranced upon her loveliness, there rose
A strain of heavenly music sweet and clear,—
The sunset flaming in the golden West
Crowned her with clouds of splendor as she sang.
Oh, wondrous melody! I seemed to hear
The voice of the great mother, Nature, stirred
With deep compassion, calling to her breast
The Old World's teeming millions,—even these
Her sad, imprisoned children, knowing not
The magic of her smile. A strange, sweet song!
For in its sound all harmonies divine
Seemed mingled into one,—the murmur of the sea
On distant shores, the sighing of the pines
In lonely forests, rushing of swift streams
Down mountain gorges, white with flying foam,
And wild, exulting winds that sweep above
A wide, fair land of peace and liberty.
And then through all I heard the varied sounds
Of human industry set face to face
With Nature's royal gifts,—the drip of nets
Whose silver salmon glitter in the sun,
The groaning of the giant trees that fall
Beneath the woodman's axe, the roar and plunge

Of mighty timbers rolling from the chutes,
The ceaseless washing of the golden sands
That yield their sparkling treasures day by day,
The sealer's guns among the icy floes,
The lowing of great herds in grassy vales,
The hum of mills, and whirr of flying wheels,—
All these deep undertones seemed subtly blent
Into one song of magic harmony.
But soon the music sank in sweeter strains,
I heard the tender rustling of the leaves
In smiling orchards ripening to the sun,
And whispers of low winds that gently stir
The golden wheat in peaceful meadow lands,—
Then borne upon the dying cadence came
Light laughter of fair children hastening home
By flowery ways, and through the eventide
The sound of distant bells that faintly chime
Upon the twilight sky.

The song was done.

Then softly, slowly rolled the silv'ry mist
From silent seas, and veiled the radiant form
Of her who sang, forever from my sight.
But still the glow of sunset in the West
Shone bright across the world. Its glory fell
Upon the bier where shadows shrouded deep
The dying Century, and gently laid
On his scarred brow a light of hope and peace.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

Inconsistency in quoting has been retained.

[The end of *The Lions' Gate and Other Verses* by Lily Alice Cooke Lefevre]