

*The Amber Army and  
Other Poems*

**W. T. Allison**

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# THE AMBER ARMY

And Other Poems

BY

William T. Allison



TORONTO  
WILLIAM BRIGGS  
1909

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TO MY WIFE

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## The Amber Army

Red-coated, amber, gray,  
The falling leaves to-day  
Drop in dead drifts within the wood,  
As soldiers should.

In their green, glorious prime,  
Through the short summer-time,  
They swung, like soldiers on parade,  
In sun and shade.

Then came the stern campaign  
With wind and frost and rain,  
Making the brilliant countryside  
One ruin wide.

Of hosts so fair and fine,  
Witness the thin red line,  
The sole survivors of the fray  
Of yesterday.

Soon the last leaf will fall  
From every tree, and all  
The leaves which drew such valiant breath  
Lie hushed in death.

The amber army dies  
Under the frosty skies;  
They fall by myriads in the wood  
As soldiers should.

Like men the leaves go down,  
Careless of all renown,  
But all are heroes, leaves and men,  
In God's kind ken.

Life's grim, courageous fight



Rages by day and night,  
In forest and in city street,  
Charge and retreat.

But no good ever dies,  
Success in failure lies;  
New life shall spring from out the mould,  
New from the old.

## The Coming of Winter

The first snow flies in the autumn skies,  
And the wind is chill and eerie,  
And night looks down with her pale, cold frown  
On the fields grown gray and dreary.

For whole nights long with their piping song,  
In the heavens high and calm,  
The bird-hosts passed from the winter's blast  
To the cypress and the palm.

From the chill snowflake and the dark, blue lake,  
And the river's reedy mouth,  
The wild duck swings on his whistling wings  
To the rice-swamps of the south.

A chirp will sound from the frozen ground  
On the morrow's morn full clear—  
The whip-like note from the snow-bird's throat  
Of the winter's chime and cheer.

**At a  
Toboggan Meet**

Light, graceful clouds across the sky  
Are scudding swift to-night,  
But fleeter than yon gauze on high  
Can flaunt before the moon's full eye  
Our craft career their flight.

Bold privateers, they hurry o'er  
A foamy stretch of sea,  
With cargoes laden precious more  
Than fabled store on ocean floor,  
Or wealth of Araby.

Out in the frosty atmosphere  
From their gay decks are flung  
The hearty laugh, the ringing cheer,  
The mirthful notes full sweet and clear  
That fall from Beauty's tongue.

Adown the long inclines they glide,  
And over fields below,  
Trim vessels with the wind allied,  
The playthings of our northern pride,  
Toboggans o'er the snow.

## **Earth's Visitants**

From God's eternal home a myriad souls  
    Pass out continually to those bright stars  
Which are the peopled worlds of space; as rolls  
    That ceaseless stream to slake perchance old War's  
Red thirst, or sink into the sands of Time,—  
    A flood of souls to face our mortal pain,  
To meet the heart-aches of our earthly clime  
    Until they go unto their own again,—  
As the wide wave of human life outgoes  
    To strike upon earth's shores, one every age,  
In yon celestial choir, moved by our woes  
    A man becomes man's sorrows to assuage.  
Immortal poets, golden-mouthed with song,  
Brave Time, to voice the right, to break the wrong.

## The November Wind

Hark how the wind drives through the night,  
Accompanied by the rain;  
He roars, he raves, he sweeps in might  
Across the dreary plain.

The grasses bend before his face  
And hear him tell their doom;  
He shakes the flowers with surly grace,  
They tremble in the gloom.

Then savagely he bounds away  
Toward the forest lone,  
The gnarled old boughs, they fret and sway  
With many a creak and groan.

Death and destruction dog his heels,  
And winter, sad and drear;  
Ten thousand leaves each way he wheels  
Go whirling, brown and sere.

Blow on, thou melancholy wind,  
For summer joys are fled;  
In thy loud voice relief I find  
For grief long nourishèd.

**Venimus ad Larem  
Nostrum**

This was the choicest phrase in ancient Rome,  
Because they loved religion's simpler way,  
"We come to our own house, to our own home,  
Where Lares and Penates hold their sway."

What though Olympian Jove with awful frown,  
With thundrous wrath our pious duties claim,—  
We place upon his brow the iron crown,  
And with low voice his power and pride we name.

What though Queen Juno, dignified, mature,  
Compel us to our knees in wondering awe,—  
We give her praise, her votive gifts are sure,  
The mistress of the ordered realm of law.

What though Minerva, pale with thought divine,  
Goddess of wisdom, furtive fancy chain,—  
We burn our incense at her quiet shrine,  
Then turn our thoughts to our own home again.

What though these greater gods be served and feared,  
While in their temples we may linger long,—  
Return we at the last; as home is neared  
Our hearts are glad, we lift the festal song.

And as we come in haste dear Venus hears,  
'Tis she with blushing smile that opes the door,—  
And we forget our cares, our pious fears,  
For we have gained our own loved home once more.

## The Ancient Man of Spoil

A melancholy man at most is he,  
Dull-visaged as he wanders thro' the fields,  
Where smiling Ceres fills her granary  
With golden store, or counts her precious yields.  
Down thro' the purple vineyards Autumn reels  
With listless hand lifting the skins of wine;  
He takes no joy in sunshine, and the flowers  
Fall limp and dead beneath his rusty heels.  
Idly to watch from some brown hill's incline  
The dance of whirling leaves in ghostly line,  
Careworn, he loves to lie in windy bowers.

Drunk with some misty opiate he lies,  
While mellow beauty holds the world in fee;  
While maple groves take on the gorgeous dyes  
Of Indian Summer, and each poplar tree  
Rains amber tears into the nearest stream.  
The smoky incense of the fruitful soil  
Ascends with rich aromas for the gods,  
If, haply, they will but prolong the dream  
Of peace enfolding Mother Earth, and foil  
Designing Autumn, ancient man of spoil,  
The stupid dotard with the tempest rods.

The old man Autumn shortly wakes from sleep;  
He shakes his russet locks and sallies forth  
Across the wold; then, with a voice as deep  
As death, he calls upon the bitter North,  
Who sits forever on his throne of cold,  
To loose his storm-clouds and his numbing rain.  
The skies grow dim and drear; early till late  
The wild geese slant their southern flight; the fold  
Harbors the silly sheep; the weather-vane  
Swings in the wind and wet, till once again  
Rests Autumn, nature's avatar of fate.

## **Fallen on Evil Days**

Stern soul of him composed, though sad in sooth,  
    To think on those full righteous and flown days  
    When mighty Cromwell smoothed all forward ways  
To God's elect, showing to foes small ruth;

On him in musing lost gay Whitehall youth,  
    From some wild orgies fled or grosser plays,  
    Down to the dreary lodging came to gaze  
On Milton, Vindicator of the Truth.

In room ill-tapestried with rusty green,  
    Devoid of books and comforts all, he sate,  
In black severely clad, devout in mien.

And while they looked straight vanished all their hate;  
    The clear, gray, sightless eyes, the face serene,  
Claimed love and pity for a poet great.



**To the Grays  
and the Browns**

League upon league of ice and snow,  
And February's bitter chill,—  
Yet "Bob White" marks with fairy show  
His tiny trail up Indian Hill.

And through the bitter, blustering day,  
With snowshoes on her scaly feet,  
The ruffed grouse picks her happy way  
To her low-hidden, snug retreat.

Brave little fluffs in grays and browns  
Breasting the cheerless winter skies,  
Men winter-worn in grumbling towns  
Might look to you with shame-filled eyes.

**When  
Woden Walks  
the Night**

The moon flees from the wolves of air  
Across the dismal sky,  
The wind is bleak and full of care,  
Each star a dead man's eye.

For Woden walks the spacious night,  
Down come from heavenly halls  
Whose eastern casements bloody bright  
Gleam under waving palls.

O Woden, God of Victory,  
With heroes girded round,  
Ten thousand German shields to thee  
With warrior praise resound.

And all the Gothic sires uplift  
Their song of many wars,  
Hoping with thee at last to drift  
Beneath the moon and stars,—

*“O Woden, onward sweep in might  
O'er silent wood and plain,  
While sons of Glory tread the night,  
Proud spectres in thy train.*

*“We love to feel the battle's thrill,  
The thrust of spear on shield,  
Gladly our life's red wine we spill  
On Woden's passionate field.*

*“Grim god of war, once more we raise  
The victors' age-old song,  
Behold our wounds, receive our praise,  
And war's fierce joys prolong.”*

While Teutons in their savage pride  
Fling shouts to hosts above,  
O Woden, hear the foeman's bride  
In darkness mourn her love!

## Watchmen of the Heights

Along the mountain peaks of time they stand,  
    Homeric bards, that ever strike the strings  
That thrill or soothe, the music of the land  
    Ethereal and divine; each poet brings  
To those grown dark and torpid in the clay  
    A holy fire, the light that lingers long  
About empyrean coasts of heaven's day;  
    He handeth down the golden gifts of song,  
For all men's sorrow-cries, and bells that toll,  
All love and life are echoed in his soul.

Like meteors stream the watch-fires from the steep  
    Of eras numberless, and there I mark,  
Limned clear against the blaze, the tireless sweep  
    Of hands across immortal strings, and hark!  
I hear the voices of those blessed few  
    Surge through the upper air of space to God,  
The voices of the night in kinship true  
    With those sweet-throated songsters from the sod  
Springing triumphant, stirring farthest skies  
With passion songs and glorious symphonies.

## O Lonely Wind

O lonely Wind, my sudden guest,  
I hear you coming through the night;  
You veer, you plunge from north to west,  
The trees are cringing in affright.

You sweep across the frozen bay,  
The sand-hills tremble at your breath;  
The snows that slept but yesterday,  
They sleep no more the sleep of death.

They dance like spectres in your train  
Across the desolate divide,  
Until with hollow voice again  
You bid their ghostly forms subside.

And so across the frosty wold,  
Old friend and true, you come to me,  
You seek a covert from the cold,  
You cry the old-time mystery.

And yet for all you love to roar  
The same old song for me to-night  
That windy Troy town heard of yore,  
I cannot read your song aright.

No human ear can understand  
Your mumbled magic or your prayer,  
Can know the penance you have planned  
To please the spirits of the air.

You bear your burden down the land,—  
Yet, ancient friend, come soon again;  
The sullen voice, the violent hand  
Disguise the immemorial pain.

## **Sunditores Imperiorum**

O spirits tremendous, titanic, austere,  
Who founded the empires of earth,  
Your fabrics of glory were builded on fear,  
The music of swords was your mirth.

Defiant, undaunted, you travelled the path  
Where Destiny beacons success,  
And peoples opposing succumbed to your wrath,  
And Liberty shrieked in distress.

Like lamps at a feast ye all flamed in your pride,  
The pomp of great kings was your prize,  
And Lust, your elusive and beautiful bride,  
Flashed views of far fields in your eyes.

O Founders of Empire, how massive your tread;  
How crimson the flower of your fame;  
What visions of glory, invincible dead,  
Arise at each magical name!

O Masters of Men, notwithstanding your power,  
Death sought you and vanquished you quite;  
Fate suffered you, each for his one little hour,  
Then plunged you in nethermost night!

## **The Dream of Lucretius**

Gloomy with thought, upon the poet's eyes  
Imagination's charmèd hand was laid,  
Till he forgot the blue of Tuscan skies,  
The luscious life of Italy, which made  
The ceaseless, sensual holiday of art:  
Stern son of Rome, the power of ghostly sight  
Fell on him, and the passion of his heart  
Smote him with bitter grief, as in the light  
Of revelation he beheld the dead  
Sad hosts of time pass with their silent tread.

From the bright atmosphere of kindly hope,  
From aspirations and the pride of youth,  
From love as 'twere immortal, from the scope  
Of eyes that followed full of fear and truth,  
On swept that millioned company of earth  
With jest or groan towards the fatal shore  
Of that great deep, for whom when man had birth  
The gods heaved out of chaos; evermore  
The death mists trail along that ebon sea,  
Hoarse roll the waves of death eternally.

The days that had been he again beheld,—  
Lucretius, fainting, saw the shivering souls  
Of men and nations mortal, seized and felled  
By deaf and dumb Oblivion, who controls  
The vast far-reaching shore, beneath the flood  
Plunging those pilgrims from the realms of time.  
The mighty vision fled; the rich warm blood  
Pulsed through the poet's veins once more; of rhyme  
And dalliance he straightway fonder grew,  
For love and wine were good and days were few.

**The Lament  
for Thammuz**



The days begin to wane, and Evening lifts  
Her eyes the sooner towards the vales of sleep;  
The yellow leaf upon the night-breeze drifts,  
And winter-voices thunder from the deep;  
Thammuz grows pale in death, the Queen of Shades  
Mocks sad-eyed Ishtar and her mourning maids.

Prostrate along the Babylonish halls,  
On alabaster floors the women moan,  
All unadmired the lilac-tinted walls  
Bespangled wantonly, and sculptured stone;  
Thammuz is torn from Ishtar, Queen of Love,  
And she, bereft, upbraids high heaven above.

Let all the Land between the Rivers sigh,  
And such as ever danced with throbbing veins  
To Ishtar's music, fill the gloomy sky  
With lamentation and most doleful strains;  
Thammuz is dead; no more the shepherd leads  
His golden flock along Im's jewelled meads.

Proud Larsam of Chaldean cities blest,  
Famed for the glories of her sun-god's home,  
Erech, where countless kings are laid to rest,  
And Eridhu, wet with the salt sea foam:—  
Princes and priests and lustrous maidens there  
Sing plaintive hymns to Thammuz young and fair.

And out upon Shumir-Accadian plains,  
Beneath the orient night, the shepherd boy  
Blows from his oaten pipe the sweet refrains  
That sadly tell of Ishtar's one-time joy;  
Ana, lord of the starry realms of space,  
Roams near to earth seeking the young god's face.

Yet full-zoned Ishtar will not weep for aye,  
Nor will the land forever saddened be,  
For Thammuz will return; some springtime day  
He will appear in sweeter liberty:  
Chaldean lovers will take heart again,  
The Queen of Love will kiss the sons of men.

**Hymeneal Chant  
of an  
Algonquin Maiden**

(An exact translation of a French  
prose version of the original.)

Yes, I love you;  
Warrior so noble and tall,  
Straight as the pine,  
Yours is a courage divine  
From the Master of Life,  
The good Manitou.

Yes, I love you;  
For I can see your clear heart,  
Heart now mine own.  
Pure are its veins as the zone  
Of first sunlight which flames  
Adown on the dew.

Yes, I love you,  
Brave one, with words ever kind,  
Sweet as the sap  
Filling with sugar earth's lap  
From the maples in spring  
When flowers are new.

Yes, I love you;  
Beam on me, heart, for your face  
Seemeth a leaf  
Trembling in air; oh, my chief,  
So enchanting and gay,  
Be mine the years through!

**A Summer's Night  
on the  
University Lawn**

Infinite calm of the summer night,  
Warm stars in a measureless distance of space,  
Low voice of the wind in the trees and the towers,  
Silence and gloom round the stately old place.

Cold, in a splendor of silence, gray,  
Half-hidden in ivy the dense Norman pile,  
Wide home of the arts and the wisdom of men,  
Sleeps in her classic repose for the while.

Lonely the lawn, yea and lonely, too,  
My heart, as I brush through the wind-shaken grass;  
Gone, gone, the fresh gold-woven garment of spring,  
Hesperides' flowers, first to come, first to pass.

Sere the long grass, all its hope gone dead,—  
Hopeless my heart, for a step here shall fall  
No more, and the charm of thy presence alone  
Broods like a ghost over campus and hall.

**A Song  
in Absence**

I am in thrall to loneliness,  
Although I dimly hear  
The city's nightly storm and stress,  
An undertone of fear.

Dull-sensed and lonely here in gloom,  
Two thousand miles from you,  
Oh, sadly I recall the bloom  
Of days alas! too few.

Too swiftly fled in places fair  
Clear to the even-fall;  
Oh, blithe the days, oh, sweet the air,  
Where love shone over all!

We saw the golden harvest moon  
Rise o'er the silent fields,  
And touch with tenderness full soon  
The sheaves of famous yields.

We heard the wind go organing  
Down through the old pine grove,—  
“So long as time is on the wing  
The human heart will love.”

Then stole a spirit from the skies,  
With affluent, heavenly art  
He wrote my fate within thine eyes,  
And bound us heart to heart.

## To a Mummy in Victoria College

O little Princess, in profound amaze  
I look upon thy silent, sombre face,  
Whose cheeks in ancient Egypt's palmy days  
The proud Rameses kissed with kingly grace.  
And these same tiny feet, in cerements wrapped,  
Once paced the golden floors of lordly On;  
Where often thou hast petulantly tapped  
Mosaics iris-hued, and frowned upon  
Some Prince of mighty Ind who loved thee well,  
Whose after-grief thou, only thou, couldst tell.

And did this little head, whose tressèd hair  
Held stony damp of lonely, desert tomb  
For full three thousand years, contain a share  
Of learning more sublime than all the bloom  
Of occidental lore? Ah, if you chose,  
O relic of a people wondrous wise,  
What unknown sciences couldst thou disclose  
To strike our scholars with a dumb surprise;  
But, Princess, thou art mute and hollow-eyed,  
And past thee dignified the sages stride.

Canst bear the sunlight fall upon thy brow  
And touch thy dusky cheek with dazzling glare?  
'Tis great Osiris, Princess; often thou  
Hast bowed to Egypt's chiefest god in prayer.  
Aye, oft this one-time warm and throbbing breast  
Recumbent lay on marble pavement rare,  
As cold as pallid death, whilst thou addressed  
The wingèd deity, till trumpets' blare  
From holy, white-robed, thousand priests was done  
In incense-vapored On, the Temple of the Sun.

When sable Night, o'er whom high Isis reigns,  
Throws horrid gloom along this college hall,  
Hear'st thou again the clink of golden chains

Heardst thou again the clink of golden chains

On Nubian slaves, the measured rise and fall  
Of ivory oars, as Father Nilus bore

The royal barge, where beauty sat enshrined,  
A perfume-breathing fairyland before,

And lines of glittering palaces behind?

But all I ask is vain, O Princess old,

Thy tongue is withered and thy heart is cold.

Thou mummy, snatched from out Egyptian land,

Pathetic emblem of antiquity,

Full well I know as here by thee I stand

The common ground of our humanity;

The Jews were merely slaves when thou wast young,

The Pantheon was yet unhewn, fell Rome

Lay nerveless in the womb of Time, unsung

The song of empire in thy present home.

Princess, a paradox thou art in sooth,

Of man's old age, of man's eternal youth!

**Egerton  
Ryerson**

Here in the Chapel's holy, melting light  
A tenderness comes o'er the square-hewn face,  
A rich, transforming touch of twilight grace  
That makes the brow's full majesty and might  
Seem less severe, and shows the eyes more bright  
And gentler in their granite cavities;  
But naught can smooth from this our Hercules  
The lines of stress about those lips locked tight.  
For he it was who fought our fight and fared  
Of old as our brave knight, our pioneer  
He blazed the easy road for you and me,  
He struggled for us all, he planned, he dared,  
He gave us liberty; behold him here,  
Strong servant of that truth which makes us free.

**From  
Fleur-de-lys  
to Rose**

What sweep of circumstance and turn of fate  
    Since Donnacona viewed the alien ships!  
Tribe after tribe gone down in savage hate,  
    Or with the name of Christ upon their lips.

Gone are the glories of the old régime  
    Within the stately fortress of the north;  
And that barbarian pomp, a daring dream  
    In which Versailles was rudely shadowed forth

A song, a dance, a kiss in old Quebec,  
    The voyageur has gaily said farewell;  
The intrepid wanderer takes little reck  
    Of horrid haps so easy to foretell.

Sons of fair France, the wooded solitude,  
    The shining river, or the fields of snow,  
Made men, like Frontenac, of fearless mood,  
    The real romancers of the long ago!

But Frontenac is dead; the Fleur-de-Lys,  
    So bravely flaunting in the face of doom,  
Is fallen from the place of empery;  
    Changed is that silent land of forest gloom.

Where stood the wilderness, great cities rise;  
    The Saxon holds the wide, wide North in fee;  
And Canada, a nation, glorifies  
    The mighty Island-Mother oversea.



## **The Coronation of King Edward III.**

When Caesar stood and mused in lonely thought  
Upon the chalky cliffs of Kent, and fought  
His battles o'er again, his thin lip curled  
In scorn, there on the limit of his world,  
At this last conquest of a savage race;  
And there was sadness written on his face  
Because of barren wars waged for this isle,  
That lay along the sea of darkness, while  
The motherland of pomp and pride  
Beckoned him home to rule her empire wide.

In this small isle to-day is Edward crowned;  
But this same realm is now encompassed round  
With the strong love of lands beyond the foam,  
Kingdoms and empires hailing her as home,  
Vast continents whose shores were still unguessed  
When Caesar gazed toward the boundless west;  
And if our new-made King of British Men  
Look but in fancy o'er the world, his ken,  
In searching all earth's coasts, would seek in vain  
For Roman triremes on the southern main.

**The Intendant  
Talon's Farewell  
to New France**

(Quebec, 1672)

The wind is in the sails, so now farewell  
To crimson woods, coureurs de bois, for, lo!  
The smoke is lifting from the citadel;  
The good-bye guns have spoken, and we go.

Oh, stiff and black the pines on Sillery's steep,  
Brave sentinels against the autumn skies;  
The shadows gather on the hills; the sleep  
Of winter steals into Kanàda's eyes.

Wrapped in eternal silence frowns Tourmente,  
Quebec is now a glimmering crown of light,  
And Montmorency pours his hoarse lament,  
As we slip down the tide into the night.

The broad St. Lawrence carries us to sea,  
And we the winding stream shall nevermore  
Unravel, nor the chanson ringing free  
Hear round the camp-fire on the lone lake's shore.

Gone, gone the robust days in forest-land,  
The flashing paddles of the war canoe,  
The voyageurs, the grim Algonquin band—  
Farewell, Romance, farewell, my friends, to you!

Thou region of prime fellowship, farewell;  
Farewell, new world of fierce, impetuous joy,  
Where the wild woodland hears the savage yell,  
And louder yet the cry of "Vive le roi!"

Come, breath of vastness, blowing through the gloom,  
Sing to me of the fresh heart of the north:  
O northern land of wonder and of bloom,  
Thy spell upon me sends me sadly forth!

## Cartier Arrives at Stadacona

At Stadacona half the sky  
Was crimsoned with the sunset's dye;  
    The river streaked with gold,  
The broad St. Lawrence, in the pride  
Of countless forests by his tide,  
    Out to the ocean rolled.

They stood on Stadacona's steep  
And gazed towards the boundless deep,  
    Did Donnacona's braves;  
In awe they looked, these savage men,  
To where within their piercing ken  
    White wings flew o'er the waves.

In wonderment they peered, and still  
The sea's strange pinions came, until  
    They flung full on the view.  
Then Donnacona, he, the wise,  
Said these were spirits from the skies  
    Sent by the Manitou.

The night crouched in the flapping sails,  
The wind roared down the forest trails,  
    The river dirged amain.  
And Donnacona dreamed that night  
The world through all the year was white,—  
    In sleep he sobbed for pain.

## **The Men of the North**

From out the cold house of the north  
Thor's stalwart children hurtled forth,  
    Forsook their sullen seas;  
Southward the Gothic waggons rolled,  
While bards foretold a realm of gold,  
    And fame, and boundless ease.

Long rang the shields with sounding blows,  
The furious din of war arose  
    Adown the dreary land;  
But Woden held them in his care,  
And safely passed the Teutons there  
    By every hostile band.

At length, one day, the host was thrilled  
At that glad cry the foremost shrilled,—  
    “The sea! A southern sea!”  
As breathless stood the northmen there,  
The wind swept through their yellow hair,  
    And sang of empery.

Rome's doom was written in their eyes,  
Fell tumult under sunny skies,  
    Death on the Golden Horn:  
Now, by the rood, what southron slaves,  
Or land that any south sea laves  
    Can face the northern born?

## The Burial of Tecumseh

The summer woods were tremulous for grief,  
    Uneasy thunder shook the lips of night,  
As passed his warriors on with their dead chief,  
    Tecumseh, slain while midmost in his might.

No word they spake as down the leafy ways  
    Their moccasins fell swift; no tear was there  
To grace the doleful time—no sign betrays  
    The measure of a stoical despair.

Six forest children bare the hero's corse  
    Until they came unto a mournful stream.  
Black-watered, and with neither sound nor force  
    To rudely break upon a dead man's dream.

They walled the stream with many a log and stone,  
    And in the virgin floor they made a grave,  
They made a sepulchre, so dark and lone,  
    To hold the form of him, the proud and brave.

Then looked each one his last and long farewell  
    On him who had renewed his nation's youth,  
Whose deeds and eloquence had flung a spell  
    Of hope which promised fair to end in truth.

So there the stately Shawanoes in gloom  
    Hid their great chief; the stream rolled on again  
To show no trace of that most kingly tomb  
    While princes die and kingdoms wax and wane.

To-night the stars swing their bright lamps above  
    And joy to find them mirror'd where he lies,  
The evening-star of that sad race who rove  
    No more light-hearted 'neath the northern skies.

## The Return to Nature

Just for a day I fled the town,  
The rout, the worry and the din,  
The crowded mart, the gilded sin,  
And speech of purse-proud rogue and clown.

For one brief day that cloudless sky,  
The trees, the flowers, were my delight;  
The things that pleased my childish sight  
Swam once again into my eye.

I found a solace in the wind,  
The unseen organ of the world,  
Dispensing music that was whirl'd  
O'er Iran's plains time out of mind.

The same tempestuous melodies  
And deepest dirges low of tone,  
That seemed supernal wrath or moan  
To Goths afoot for southern seas.

Grown hard with city sleights and moil,  
I learned to humbly bow once more  
Upon old Nature's temple floor,  
The dear brown earth, the kindly soil.

I felt the peace which Nature gives  
To him who contemplates her face,  
Who metes by her all time and space,  
The littleness in which he lives.

For what of splendor or of fame  
Can vaunt itself beneath the sun?  
The race of myriads is run,  
But Nature's face is e'er the same.

The secret craft of Memphian priest

The secret craft of Memphisian priest,  
The grace of Athens, thews of Rome,  
Sidonian triremes turning home,  
The mellow wonder of the East,—

Who shall see them restored again?  
The memory of their pride and shame  
Held by the learned few, their name  
Strange to the mass of modern men!

Along the great white roads of Time,  
In spite of pomp and sneering lust,  
Life's caravans are blown to dust,  
And only Nature moves sublime.



## Abendlied

(Translated from the German  
of Hoffmann von Fallersleben.)

Purple Even comes once more  
Over wood and wold,  
Peace she breathes from heaven's floor,  
Sleep for young and old.

Yet the noisy river pours  
O'er the rocks below,  
And it ferments and it roars  
With unceasing flow.

Comes for it no even-time,  
No peace sweet and deep,  
Never twilight-bell can chime  
Rest-songs till it sleep.

So art thou, my striving heart,  
Struggling to be free;  
God alone can peace impart,  
Give true rest to thee.

## A Galley Slave of Sidon

A fair-haired slave of Sidon, what to him  
Her dream of empire and her fame?  
Chained to the trireme's oar, defiant, grim,  
He cries his curses on her name.

And what to him her purple pride, her quest  
For new dominions, unknown seas,  
And all the untouched wonders of the west,  
And apples of Hesperides?

Dull his poor eyes to pomp, and dead to dreams  
His withered heart; his Dacian home  
All but forgot; faint and far-off the screams  
Of his young brood destroyed by Rome.

How can his sullen eyes see past the oar  
That holds him to his daily death?  
Can Sidon's prayers for her great quest be more  
To this dull slave than idle breath?

To him the cheers, the tumult on the quay,  
Are hollow echoes on the wind;—  
The chiefs of Sidon seek the outer sea,  
Fame lures them far, and fate is blind.

\* \* \* \* \*

But Sidon's hopes were doomed, and fickle Fate  
Denied the splendid galley's quest;  
Fate heard the slave's prayer daily hissed in hate,—  
His quest was death, his hope was rest!

## Gray Ghost in June

Gray night in June,  
With cold, incessant rain  
And wind of melancholy strain,  
I read thy rune  
Of mystery, thy meaning full of pain.

In these the days  
Of summer's first perfume,  
Of buds flung forth in spacious bloom  
O'er winding ways,  
In sunlit areas and nooks of gloom;

When life runs high,  
Seems death a fantasy  
To even such as stoics be;  
With beauty's eye  
Aglow with tenderness or chivalry;

Even now is come  
A night gray-stoled and drear,  
As though an anchorite austere,  
With visage glum,  
Had boldly walked into a hall of cheer.

And there aloof,  
But with no speech, had eyed  
The sensuous bridegroom and his bride,  
Till such reproof  
Had chilled with fear of death their love and pride.

Gray ghost in June,  
A sombre warning thine:  
Beauty will fade howe'er so fine,  
And soon, ah! soon,  
Life's song will cease and spilled be all her wine!

**Midnight Mass for  
the Nineteenth  
Century**

The great high altar shines in gold and white,  
And flutters with the taper's holy flame;  
The mass of Christ is being said to-night  
With gorgeous chasuble and stately rite,  
And many a mention of our Saviour's name.

The same sonorous chant and mumbled prayer  
Of grand liturgic pomp; the incense swung  
With rhythmic lift from right to left; the air  
Mistily fragrant in the chancel there  
As when this church of centuries was young.

Soft are the stains of time on mouldering walls,  
Worn the mosaics dim which timorous knees  
Have pressed long ages since, and grim the stalls  
Grotesquely carved, where the loud Ave falls  
In tones that speak the awful mysteries.

O ancient fane, O venerable shrine,  
O sacred litany untouched of time!  
To think that this slow-swelling pomp of thine  
Should speak for Him, so simple, yet divine,  
Who humbly walked in yon far eastern clime!

## **The Cry of the Romanticist**

To-morrow I shall once again behold  
    The bright clear weather after skies of gray,  
    Forever through the unaccustomed day  
I shall be puissant in the lists of old.

Delay not, therefore, shining day of gold,  
    But spring eternal from the fields of night,  
    And lift my soul into far seas of light,  
And bring me near my perfect love, Isolde.

For in this night of time no more I find  
    The fluted dreams, unperishing and high,  
The ringing temper of the ancient mind.

Glory is gone, while Love, a wasted thing,  
    Looks from dim windows on the passers-by,  
And Love, alas! has lost the heart to sing!

## Arius, the Heretic

So came he from the burning Libyan sands  
To lift his voice in Alexandria,  
From thence straightway to set the church in flame.  
But who of all the learned city's rout  
Would fear the name or face of Arius?  
He moved like some pale ghost adown their streets,  
A melancholy giant from the west,  
Scarce heeding where he went, so lost in thought  
Unorthodox, deep-going, and sublime  
On Christ's relation to the Trinity.  
Face ghastly pale, and features lean and worn,  
And eyes adream in sunken cavities;  
A sadness in his mien assorting well  
With gray, dishevelled locks and squalid dress;  
And yet there hung about him all the grace,  
The sweetness and the sympathy of Christ.  
Madman they called him for his matted hair,  
His eyes of flame, his passion for his dream  
Of truth, but he, the unregarded saint—  
Abhorred because his thought was something new—  
Struck the first blow for freedom of the mind,  
And shook the world.

## **The Larger Hope**

Oh, sad and doubly sad to think  
That death, the pitiless,  
From thy soft-speaking eyes will drink  
Their placid loveliness!

But death a larger hope conveys,  
Works good in cruel guise;  
For in those depths the soul delays,  
Soul hidden in thine eyes.

Death will release the soul for aye;  
While golden æons roll,  
Shall we, through the exultant day,  
My love, see soul to soul.

**On a  
Windless Night**

Without the windless night was bitter cold,  
The ice-bound river thundered 'neath the frost,  
And deftly were the window-panes embossed  
By those chill fingers, skilful from of old.

But January round to June had rolled,  
For that I held her in true love's embrace,  
And all the rose of June was in her face,  
With paler tints that apple-blooms unfold.

Sweetly reluctant, yielded she to me,  
Her pure soul shining in her deep, blue eyes,  
As there we closed and kissed our hearts away.

Our beings mingled on our lips, to be  
In confluence forever and a day,  
Even when this full-veined life descends and dies.



## **A Rainy May Evening**

Spring sends a ceaseless drench of rain  
Aweeping down my window-pane,  
    To close the showery day;  
Above the trees a leaden sky  
Rolls angrily a cloudy eye  
    Into the alley-way.

The trolley cars with muffled roar,  
Like reeking giants pass the door,  
    Hoarse phantoms of the night;  
A thousand puddles faintly gleam,  
And shining pavements smoke and steam  
    In the electric light.

Few are the citizens abroad,  
And these in sullen humor plod  
    Toward a dry indoors;  
From roof to street the whole wet town  
Can nothing do but fret and frown,  
    While the spring deluge pours.

Not so the men in country places;  
Content is written on their faces,  
    Their joy is in the rain;  
It sings of flowers and emerald fields,  
Of summer fruits and golden yields,  
    A song of life and gain.

**O Amber Day  
Amid the  
Autumn Gloom**

O amber day amid the autumn gloom,  
With languid lids drooping on eyes of dream,  
How many ancient poets in their bloom  
Have sung the strange, sad wonder of thy gleam!

O splendid softness of the iron days,  
Mistress between the haunts of life and death,  
The poets of our day entune thy praise,  
And love the sweet nepenthe of thy breath.

And so to them lost in thy purple eyes,  
Come visions of the Vallombrosan groves,  
Where flaming dawns, and mellow evening skies,  
And falling leaves saw old unhappy loves.

## The Wander-Thirst

My blood is beating to the mood to-day  
That moved my sires beside the Baltic Sea,  
When they looked down the land,  
And saw on every hand  
The tiny spears of green, Earth's mystery  
When Spring-time hath her way.

The wander-thirst came on them, and their souls  
Heard voices in the hazy atmosphere  
That lured them with a spell,  
As strong as death, to say farewell  
To shores they knew, and without toil or fear  
To go where chance controls.

My heart is pulsing with their strength to-day,  
The venture-love that stirred their hearts of old,  
The fever of unrest  
That thrilled each Gothic breast,  
And filled their eyes with fire, as slow unrolled  
The plains of Italy.

They won the south, those children of the north,  
For that they had this ichor in their blood  
That crowds my pulses now,  
And strangely tells me how  
The spring brings back the old barbarian mood,  
That flung my fathers forth.

## The Muezzin's Call

Calls the muezzin in sonorous tone  
From the carved balcony at close of day,  
And the long hours of strife, on them to pray  
That are the faithful and Mohammed own.

Aside the wares of merchandise are thrown,  
With eyes to Mecca turned devoutly, bows  
Each Mussulman in muttering his vows,  
Although the Moslem heart be cased in stone.

From no cold mosque, but from my heart a call  
Of sweet compulsion bids me to adore  
Thee, placid-browed, the queen of my desire.

At eve thy matchless charms shall I tell o'er,  
Quickening my soul with love's effectual fire,—  
So do I till I be no more at all.

**In Times  
of Solitariness  
and Pain**

In times of solitariness and pain,  
Far spent with fev'rous madness and disease,  
Haply to me there comes an hour of ease,  
Of brightness for the weary heart and brain.

Though but in fancy thou art once again  
My own as in the vanished, peerless days,  
When we went wandering down the orchard ways  
Indulging hopes that were to be in vain.

Nor all, nor all in vain, O love of mine,  
For if the dread unknown be paradise,  
There shall our love be unity divine.

And should oblivion catch me from the steep  
Of time, thy loveliness shall fill my eyes  
Before I sink into eternal sleep.

## Danishings

The dark has passed, and the chill Autumn morn  
    Unrolls her faded glories in the fields;  
Dead are the gilded air-hosts newly-born,  
    And hardiest flowers droop their sodden shields,  
For lovely Summer hath cut short her stay;  
    The fickle goddess, loaded with delight,  
Grown wantonly unconstant, fled away  
    Under the hoar Frost's mantle yesternight.  
In one brief hour the warm and flashing skies  
    Pale in the marble dawn; we cannot choose,  
But marvel, that hearts turn to stone, and eyes  
    Brimful of passion all their lustre lose.  
Drear is the morning; love is gone for aye,  
Love done to death in one bright peerless day.

## To the Shade of Symmachus

'Twas Vir Clarissimus they titled thee  
In Rome some sixteen centuries ago,  
They made thee Pontifex and bowed the knee,  
And named thee Champion of Victory,  
And chose thee Quaestor, master of the show.

And yet for all thy pomp at many a feast,  
Good friend and gentleman of ancient Rome,  
Inexorable Time counts thee the least  
Among the sons of Romulus; Fame ceased  
Long since to hymn her stately praetor home.

Praetor, whose purple pride has passed away,  
Thine eyes were blinded to the rising light;  
Thy pompous feet found not the better way;  
From the one vital force in that dead day  
Thou stood'st aloof and chose perpetual night.

Disdainful Roman Senator, whose pride  
Ignored the lowly life of truest breath,  
The glory of the Cross, what ashen tide  
Bears thy dead soul upon its bosom wide  
Far down the listless, endless realms of Death?

## The Canadian Pine

A keen, sweet fragrance lies along the air,  
The odor of the tall Canadian pine;  
How soft the sunbeams on his needles shine,  
And where the snow has left the forest bare,  
He spreads his russet carpet everywhere.  
High in his swaying top the crooning wind  
Eases his stormy soul,—time out of mind  
He sought his ancient, steadfast solace there.  
And so I find beneath the sturdy pine,  
The spirit of the north, the blessed peace  
That calms this easy-troubled soul of mine,  
And gives to discontent a sure surcease.  
In all the north I love the pine the best,  
Emblem of strength, simplicity and rest.



## The Eternal Path

Time drives us on along the eternal way,  
And as we strain toward the unknown goal,  
We hail with joy or grief each new-born day,  
We bless or curse the seasons as they roll.

But this our Earth is doomed as well as we;  
She holds her course unwearied round the sun;  
She spins along the path, unwitting she,  
If ever her long journey will be done.

And he, our central force, our life, our light,  
Sun of our little group of starry spheres,  
He plunges on into the infinite,  
Unknowing what celestial coasts he nears.

And other suns, a million suns beside,  
With frightful, unimaginable force,  
Are whirling through aerial deserts wide  
To unknown bournes on the eternal course.

Secret the way, far-off, unknown the goal,  
And yet the Father holds us in His care;  
He guides His worlds, He lifts the weary soul;  
He knows the way, He hears the feeblest prayer.

## **The Great Companion**

Oh, come, my Lord, and walk with me  
Through all the ways of life;  
I need Thy presence, Lord, each day,  
In quiet or in strife:  
Oh, let me feel Thee near  
On joyous days or drear.

Oh, come, dear Christ, and strengthen me  
My calling to fulfil,  
Make all my service glad and free,  
And consecrate my will:  
My weakness, Lord, I own,  
I cannot walk alone.

Oh, Man of Sorrows, come to me  
When anguish wrings my soul,  
Fill me with Thy serenity  
And make my spirit whole:  
For life's Gethsemane  
Is glorified by Thee.

And when at last I view the shore  
Of the eternal sea,  
And hear death's mighty waters roar,  
Oh, come and pilot me:  
Until through storm and night  
I reach the world of light.

**Gray Europe  
to the  
Golden East**

Gray Europe to the Golden East,  
The camel-train from Muscovy  
To where each lean and leathery beast  
Rests while the pilgrim riders feast  
Beneath the budding almond-tree.

Siberian snows, the bitter wind  
Down Tartar plains, dead wastes and drear,  
To where the sun doth burn and blind,  
And spiced breaths of the south wind find  
The full-blown flowers through all the year.

Gray Europe to fair Palestine,  
The green hills for the desert's frown,  
For iron spire the gorgeous shrine;  
O Pilgrim, Christ's own joys are thine,  
From gray to gold, from cross to crown.

## **The Dream of the Disciples**

They followed their meek Lord from day to day,  
And ever as they went hung on His power,  
For through the works He did they saw the way  
That led to the inevitable hour.

Christ, how they longed for that great stroke divine,  
When He should seat Himself, Master and Lord,  
O'er God's own kingdom, heir of David's line,  
The hope of Israel wielding Heaven's sword!

By night their sleep was fevered, and their rest  
Fitful and broken in Judean fields,  
Their dream was glory, and the Master's quest  
To them meant ruin to the Roman shields.

Imperial Rome already they beheld  
Fawning and prostrate at Immanuel's feet,  
Her purple pride undone, her might dispelled  
By His supernal word from Zion's seat.

And Zion, city of their dreams, her fame  
Should awe the splendid East, and as of old  
Her God should dwell in her, and in God's name  
The Prince of Peace bring in the age of gold.

## The Living Voice

And will He speak no more to mortal men,  
The God of Revelation and of Love?  
Men passionately cry, "Speak once again,  
Send some convincing word from Heaven above.

"As if it were the ancient time and Thou  
Didst speak to Moses in the desert flame,  
Source of the non-consuming fire, even now  
So call some mighty soul to serve Thy name.

"As when Thy Spirit stirred the aspen trees  
To signal the advance against the foe,  
So now, O Lord, by outward sign to these,  
Thy present soldiers, Thine approval show.

"Lord God of Life, speak to Thy people, speak!"  
Men plead with passionate and choking cry,  
"Thy face, Thy living voice, Lord, do we seek,  
As in the dust of doubt we gasp and die!"

The trumpet tones of truth were heard of old  
And Thou dost speak to-day; men seek a sign,  
Men crave the thundrous voice from Heaven rolled  
To ratify the immemorial line.

But they who seek a sign, the Master said,  
Shall not thereby from darkness find release,  
For though one come returning from the dead,  
He could not mend their doubts nor bring them peace.

*Hear ye God's living voice, and see His face  
In Jesus Christ; yea, hear His voice to-day  
In all his sons, who, by the Lord Christ's grace,  
Exemplify the Life, the Truth, the Way.*

## **The Dream of the Old Men**

Principal Caven, a leader among those who favor organic church union, pressed the argument not only for the economy of the resources of the churches, but the higher argument from the definite prayer and expressed desire of the Head of the Church that His followers might be one.

“It would be the fulfilment of my life-dream, the answer to my life-prayer, to see these three Churches one in organization as well as in spirit,” said Chancellor Burwash. “And the barriers are breaking down.”

*Affectionately inscribed to Chancellor Burwash and  
Principal Caven.*

Life-dreams of fuller love are coming true;  
Revered old age, with shining, undimmed eyes,  
Enchanted with the unexpected view,  
Beholds another dawn of love arise.

For lo, the barriers are giving way,  
The age-long obstacles to union fall,  
And the glad dawn brings in the happier day,  
When Christ, and not the Creed, is all in all.

For this they toiled, this was their life-long prayer,  
This was their hope amid sectarian strife;  
Others abode in doubt, or in despair  
Lost the fair vision of the broader life.

Others, alas, who prayed with them, passed on  
Into their rest; they saw the far-off goal,  
But not for them the glory of the dawn,  
Three folds of Christ become one mighty whole.

But these our fathers, counselling with us yet,  
And echoing the Master's prayer that we,  
His followers, might be one—their eyes are wet  
With tears of sudden hope, and wistfully

To us they turn for instant aid, to all  
Their sons of different folds, to merge compact  
In one great brotherhood, ere God shall call  
Them home and their dream fail of living fact.

They long to see this great, new Church go forth  
To holy war, hopeful and strong and free,  
Holding the wide dominion of the north,  
Her splendid cohorts flung from sea to sea.

O gentle dreamers, saintly guides, we hear  
Your call; our senseless rivalries shall cease;  
The day of fellowship draws very near,  
And your last song shall be a song of peace.

MARCH 10th, 1905.

## The Death of La Salle<sup>[1]</sup>

The first, warm, prairie-scented breath of Spring  
Blew from the Texan plains and lulled to rest  
The little camp, men worn with wandering  
In the despairing, thrice-repeated quest  
Of the lost river, pathway to the west,  
Wide road to Nouvelle France; in dreams once more,—  
No longer by a mocking fate oppressed,—  
They found the highway home and swiftly bore  
Far northward from the cruel Metagordian shore.

Soldiers and priests in the grim bivouac—  
A handful dreaming in the wilderness—  
In fancy reached Quebec and Tadousac  
And told of great exploits, of long duresse,  
Of Fort St. Louis' graves, the sore distress  
Of France's venture in the southern land.  
Sweetly they dreamed, but no sleep came to bless  
The troubled soul of him who dared, who planned,  
Sieur de la Salle, the captain of the forlorn band.

That long, long day La Salle had watched in vain  
For the delayed return of false and true  
With hunters' spoils, and now he racked his brain  
For signs or words from which he might construe  
Some grudge they bore him or some devil's brew  
Of black conspiracy. Alas! too well  
The hero's prescient soul the future knew,  
Could conjure up his murdered men, foretell  
The assassins' work that made the wilderness a hell!

With the first break of dawn the leader rose,  
Determination writ upon his face:  
He armed himself, called for a guide and chose  
A friar to go with him to the place  
Where duty drew, perchance where death's embrace

<sup>[1]</sup>Wrote for the centenary of the discovery of the Mississippi.



would be the welcome at the journey's end.  
And as they went his talk was of the grace  
Of Heaven, which always surely doth attend  
That man who loves to make the Most High God his friend.

Douay, the friar, inscribed in after days  
The touching words La Salle confessed that morn,  
Of all he owed to God, a meed of praise  
For all His gracious care since he was born:  
How he had braved the hatred and the scorn,  
Escaped the deep designs of countless foes,  
Of governors and priests, who would have torn  
Him from their path but that the good Lord chose  
To save him from their snares, to ward off all their blows.

From that far day full twenty years before  
When bright-eyed Danger tempted him to thread  
The lonely woods to find the golden door  
To China and Japan, ever his bed  
Was 'neath the silent stars, his noiseless tread  
Upon the forest floor, or on blue seas  
And lonely lakes and spacious rivers sped  
His light canoe: a hundred tragedies  
His eyes had seen and by God's grace escaped all these.

"Wherefore," he said, "my thanks be unto God  
Who hath in all the dangers I have passed  
Seen fit to spare my life that I may laud  
And bless His name this morn: but whether cast  
Among the Iroquois, or in the blast  
Convulsing Huron sea, my heart has known  
Death comes but once, to every man at last,  
And only when God wills: if overthrown,  
This day I die without a grief, without a groan."

These solemn words at end, sadly they came  
Towards the traitors' camp, where in the sky  
Two eagles wheeled above the low fire's flame  
Waiting to seize their prey. La Salle's quick eye  
Noted this sign of death, then angrily,  
Firing his gun, he called to one who stood  
On guard for news of Marennet, Beak

On guard for news of Moranget. Reply  
Was made in tones that boded nothing good;  
Then hastening on La Salle was lured within the wood.

Crouch'd in the reed-like grass, their savage hate  
Still unappeas'd by the bright, dolorous flow  
Of comrades' blood, the hideous traitors wait  
With weapons train'd upon the man they know  
So well, once leader, now their helpless foe.  
Their moment comes: two shots the death proclaim  
Of the inflexible La Salle, brought low  
In the full flower of his deathless fame,—  
The foulest crime in all New France's deeds of shame!

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[1] See Parkman's "La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West," Chapter 27.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *The Amber Army and Other Poems* by William Talbot Allison]