

Rhyme and Reason

A Souvenir Volume of Verse
by Canadian Soldier - Poets

With the Compliments of
The Maple Leaf, Italy

RHYME AND REASON

Foreword	3
The Nation's Strength	5
Ghosts of the Living	5
Your Friend	6
When You Return	7
Musso Lied	7
Front Line Johnnies	8
To His Mistress' Eyebrow	9
Letter to « Andy »	10
Eyes Heavenward	11
Remember Pontecorvo	12
Reminders	13
Stop and Listen	14
One Man's Opinion	14
The Bombed City	15
Lira Lyrics	16
Go West, Young Man	17
Lest You Forget	18
Sick of It	19
Letter from Home	20
These Things Remain	21
For Blake	22
Soldier's Anthem	22
To Their Future	23
About P.O.W.'s	24
First	25
Request for the Fallen	26
Mother	27
Women of Rome	28
Grub Gripe	28
Peace in War	29
'Twas Not in Vain	30
In Memoriam	31
RCAF to Canadian Army	32
Source of Strength	34
L'Envoi	35

Guest Artist	36
Q. M. Oversight	36
Blame it on the Mud	37
Beyond St. Vito Road	38
On Baedeker	39
Cassino	40
Slit Trench Soliloquy	41
Haunting Phrase	41
Do You Wonder	42
Prayer Before Battle	43
Resigned	44
Nostalgia	45
« Civil Engineering »	46
Rehabilitation	47
That Little Land	49
The Lively Lady	50
Soldiers May Dream	51
Homeward Flight	52
Blow Gently, Good Wind	53
Canuck in Italy	54
Beauty Abroad	55
Ode to Unsung Poets	56
Short Comings	56
Verily, a Tragedy	57
Our Boys	58
War	59
Ode to a Canadian	60
Soliloquy	62
On Going Home	63

Illustrations by LUZNY

Published in Rome, Italy by
Canadian Public Relations Services
Feb. 1945

FOREWORD

Give a soldier a stub of lead pencil and a piece of paper and the first thing you know he's written a poem. Maybe all men are poets at heart and it just takes a war to awaken this hidden talent, for it is a fact that some really great poetry has been written by soldiers in this and other wars.

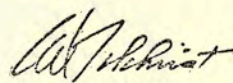
Perhaps it is because there is plenty of time to think in the army. Those long vigils when dug in and waiting for something to happen, those black, bleak nights when sleep will not come, give plenty of opportunity to think — to look inside oneself.

It is then very often that, by the light of a guttering candle in some shell-blasted casa or in some nice cozy slit trench, poems are born. They do not come full-fledged, but haltingly — perhaps only a few words, a line or two, on the back of a tattered envelope or scribbled on a cigarette box.

The Maple Leaf has, during the past year, published some excellent poetry — poems gay and whimsical, poems tragic, poems nostalgic. Now we are pleased to present to you a small collection of some of the best of this soldier verse.

It represents by no means all of the good poetry which has appeared in the weekly « Rhyme and Reason » column, but the verses re-published herewith have been selected by a competent committee of judges as *molto buono*.

We hope you'll like this little souvenir, a memento of Italy from The Maple Leaf.



(C. W. GILCHRIST) Lt. Col.
Canadian Assistant Director
of Public Relations
Allied Force Headquarters

FOREWORD

All material in this book has been
taken from The MAPLE LEAF (Italy
Edition) under Crown Copyright.

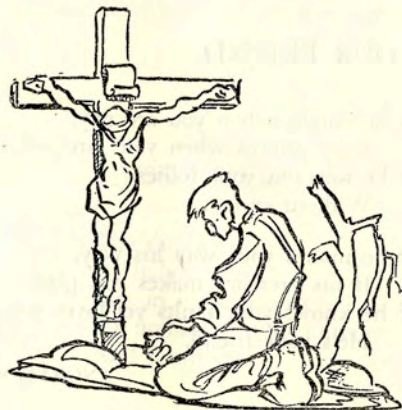
THE NATION'S STRENGTH

I know three things must always be
To keep a nation strong and free.
One is a hearthstone bright and dear,
With busy, happy, loved ones near.

One is a ready heart and hand
To love, and serve, and keep the land.
One is a worn and beaten way
To where the people go to pray.

Nation and people will survive.
So long as these are kept alive,
God, keep them always, everywhere,
The hearth, the flag, the place of prayer.

ANONYMOUS



GHOSTS OF THE LIVING

In these our days, I find myself a stranger;
The summers which the years divide for me
Are lived by people unconfined by danger—
With whom I left my heart when I was free.

In every haunted, tall, fantastic city,
In prairie stillness by secluded streams,
Beyond the sunset, strange to praise or pity,
Unnumbered, unlived lives remain as dreams.

MATTHEW WHERRY

*

YOUR FRIEND

If he laughs when you are gay,
If he grieves when you are sad,
If he tolerates your follies
Without end.

If he makes your way his way,
If his presence makes you glad,
If he knows your faults yet loves you
He's your friend.

ANONYMOUS

WHEN YOU RETURN

(Sent by F. E. Bender, CPC)

When you return I shall not question you
On all your little deeds since that far day
Time wedged our paths apart. I shall not say
As others might, who missed your presence, too:
« How did you like the town of so and so? »
Or some such phrase friends utter, unconcerned;
What use are casual words to those who learned
One day, in silence, all they need to know?
I shall abide my time and, when, at last
The clamor and the greeting all are done,
Our eyes shall meet, and silently, as one,
We shall relive one moment in the past,
And you shall know, though lips let no word fall,
That in my heart you did not leave at all.

*

MUSSO LIED

The duplicity
Of Italy
Lies in its simplicity—
It's nothing but mountains
And fountains.

R. P.

FRONT-LINE JOHNNIES

'Twas a sultry day of battle
Muddy Melfa flowed below
And all hell was apoppin'
'Bove the water's undertow.
When thru' the smoke-filled valley
Charged two men chock full of guts
Blasting for themselves an alley
Thru' the truck and trailer ruts.
Remember, Hell was breaking loose
Hot missiles screamed around
But our heroes, both undaunted
Streaked for ever higher ground
It wasn't that they shunned the noise
Or yet the flying lead
They simply wished to occupy
A slit-trench straw-filled bed.
Diving o'er the parapet
They heard the Spandaus rattle
And Taylor said to Heahy
B Ech is in a battle
We must advance to give them aid
If only as a favor
Besides I left with Georgie Pitt
My gum and last Life Saver
The battle soon was over
As down the line they came
And they were really « toasted »
These undaunted guys gained fame.

And now they lounge at well-earned ease
Swilling beer and Vino
As they await their two V.C.'s
These heroes of Cassino.

BUSTER (N.B.H.)



TO HIS MISTRESS' EYEBROW

A ballad to your eyebrow, Fairest One?
That is the pleasant task that Shakespeare set
As one befitting lovers; therefore let
Me try my hand; it should be easily done.
Its graceful curve—that, I could dwell upon
In glowing words (if I could just forget
Those other curves, more 'luring, softer yet,
Which still my pen before I have begun,
With marvelling); or I could haply sing
The lovely invitation it extends
When subtly lifted, save that everything
About you does invite when you're inclined.
How can I sing of what one brow portends
When all of you is so much on my mind?

R. E. B.

LETTER TO « ANDY »

Dear Sir, with pleasure we report
Of recent action here,
And also feats of brothers, friends,
'Though in a different sphere.
Our present leaders, able, tough,
With us, have won acclaim;
In Italy, in Normandy,
Results have been the same.
The Hun is being driven back,
He knows not where to turn.
(Recalling days of '40, Sir,
It's nice to see him squirm).
The battle's far from over
But we're keen to play our part;
We're still the blade you termed us,
Edging close to Berlin's heart.
The tempered steel of Canada's men
Has smote the Nazi horde;
We'd like to take time out to thank
The man who forged the Sword.

J. E. C.



EYES HEAVENWARD

This is my prayer, breathed from the heart
As here I stand, mud-stained and weary
In a land not mine.
Moving to the Whims of a Destiny
Born of an aimless union with two clashing thoughts
Which in their time have grown too great for me,
Shorn me of every conviction except that I am
right

To groan « This is my fight », and stay in foreign
places

Till there's an end of it.

Make me this night a thing apart
From all this mad cacophony of sound
That tears the mind of man from that which
He would dream of
When the Star of the East is at its height.

Cause me to tremble never more
At hated sounds of hate itself
Screaming through the night that should
Of all nights be serene,
Starbright, not lit by winged Death
Making sacriligious noises in its whining flight.

And when I have done my part, and spanned
My spell of service in places I can never grow to love
Carry me then over the windswept, wide and clean
Expanse of ocean to the place that is my life.

R. P.

REMEMBER PONTECORVO

On the road from Pontecorvo,
As you move down from the line,
There are rows of wooden crosses
All painted white, and fine.
They're the headstones for the fallen,
Who underneath do lie;
They're the men who came from Canada,
To fight for Peace—and die.
They're the stalwart sons of Freedom
That came from farm and mine;
They're the stalwart sons of Canada
Who broke the Hitler Line.

As you walk through rows of crosses,
As quiet as the spring,
The wanton breezes murmur
« The Torch to you, we fling ».
They've caught the Torch, and held it,
And kept it bright aflame,
And dying, throw the challenge—
« We expect of you, the same ».
When history is written
And we all in Peace abide,
Remember Pontecorvo,
And the men who fought and died.

P. J. POWER

REMINDERS

Think of the lad who was duly warned,
But now at home is sorrowfully mourned.
Booby-traps he couldn't capito,
Now, alas, you'll find he's finito.

Read all signs as you go along,
And think of the boy in serge,
Who travelled too fast to notice the sign
That said « Keep off the verge ».

WILLIAM TELESKE



STOP AND LISTEN

Take a moment, friend or neighbor,
Passing Stranger it may be,
To consider at your leisure,
Things that shortly are to be.

War on every hand arising,
Earthquakes of tremendous force.
Ocean wrecks, with fear and bloodshed
Now seem scarcely out of course.

Are we getting harder hearted?
As we hear the awful sound of dissolving
nations crumbling?

PTE. JOHN H. WELCH

*

ONE MAN'S OPINION

Keep your caviar, crepes suzettes,
Spice of Araby, Chicken croquettes,
Filet mignon or Gilead's balm—
Pass me another hunk of spam.

ANN ONYMOUS

THE BOMBED CITY

(This poem was contributed by a British author who has long been associated with the Canadian Forces in Italy).

I have seen my sons go marching to many an alien
war,
While the women wept behind them and the gay
bands played before;
Scornful if they were pitied, with a song they went
away,
They with the shining morning eyes that scarce
had seen the day.

And the grey years passed and they came again,
triumphal flags unfurled,...
And my heart cried out to the unreturned on the
other side of the world.

Why now should I mourn that the scars of war
on my own broad bosom fall?
What matters it if my body be torn when my spirit
is grown so tall?
So pity me not that my homes are dark and my
streets are empty of mirth...
I am one at last with my fallen sons in every part
of the earth.

JAMES PARISH

LIRA LYRICS

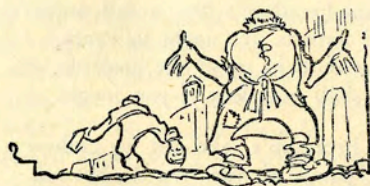
By the palazzo
Where dirty ragazzo
Squabble for cigaret butts,
And garlicky Flora,
The florid signora,
Peddles her lemons and nuts,
Lives Cici Carbone
Who runs the Salone—
« Hey Joe, shave? »

Hurry on your way
Passing his doorway
Curtained with gaily-hued beads;
Bambini pursue you,
They both cry and hue you,
Shouting your barbering needs
For Cici Carbone
Who runs the Salone—
« Hey Joe, shave? »

In the piazza
Well-developed ragazza
Stroll, after heat of the day;
Ogling soldati
Half vino-happy,
Stroll, but after their pay
Is only Carbone
Who runs the Salone—
« Hey Joe, shave? »

If you're unbarbered,
Better stay harbored
Far from the Via Umberto;
For all of God's creatures
With bewhiskered features
There suffer this public concerto:
« Pass not the Salone
Of Cici Carbone—
Hey Joe, shave? »

VICTOR GOTRO



GO WEST, YOUNG MAN

The army's O.K. in a kind of a way—
Providin' you like it, I mean,
But this land of wops ain't a land that's tops
For a finer country I've seen.
'Tis across the sea where people are free,
And to me 'twill be Paradise
When I settle down near the ol' home town,
'Neath blue Aberta skies.

G. RIES (RCA)

LEST YOU FORGET

Come hither, thou, but softly tread
For this is sacred ground. And we
Who heard the call to help set free
The peoples of the world, lie dead
Beneath these rows of crosses white;
We rest the while, no more to fight.

When guns be still'd and tumult cease,
And wars no more disturb the world,
When Freedom's flag is full unfurl'd,
And nations live again in Peace,
Keep thou in mind the goal we set;
We shall not sleep if you forget.

For Freedom's sake did we endure
The pangs of war. We do but ask
That you will carry on our task
And everlasting Peace ensure.
Work, strive for this; goodwill maintain,
Then will our lives be not in vain.

« MEL »



SICK OF IT

So you're sick of the way the country's run,
And you're sick of the way the rationing's done,
And you're sick of standing around in line.
You're sick, you say. Well, ain't that fine?
For I am sick of the sun and the heat,
And I'm sick of the feel of my aching feet,
And sick of the siren's wailing shriek,
And I'm sick of the groans of the wounded and weak.

I'm sick of the slaughter, I'm sick to my soul,
I'm sick of playing the killer's role,
And I'm sick of the groans of death and the smell,
And I'm sick, damned sick, of myself as well.
But I'm sicker still of the tyrant's rule,
And conquered lands where the wild beasts drool,
And I'm cured damned quick when I think of
the day

When all this hell will be out of the way;
When none of this mess will have been in vain,
And the lights of the world will blaze again,
And the Axis flags will be dipped and furled,
And God looks down on a perfect world.

CRAIG HEATH

LETTER FROM HOME

*(Excerpts from a letter in rhyme written to
a lad in the Irish Regiment by his mother).*

Again I sit down to write you a letter,
Hope you are well; we couldn't be better.
I've plenty of paper and plenty of time
So just to be different I'll write this in rhyme.
It is Sunday and things have been quiet all day;
Shirley is here, with her father and May.
Supper is over and work is all done,
We're out in the yard watching Shirley have fun.
I think you have chosen a lovely girl, Jack,
And we'll all be waiting to welcome you back;
We'll throw a big party and have so much fun
I'll let the whole world know I'm proud of my son.
You will have the position in life that you've earned
And you'll use to advantage the lessons you've
learned;
So just keep your chin up and don't you forget
There is happiness coming to all of you yet.
And there is a favor—please do it for me,
It will please me so much that I know you'll agree;
You remember the Psalm that you used to recite—
«The Lord is My Shepherd»? Please say it tonight.
Say it aloud so the fellows can hear,
It will strengthen their courage and banish their
fear.

By now I have written 'bout all I can write.
I think time has come that I say « Good night ».
So now that I'm finished, the letter is done;
May God bless you, Jack. Loads of love from your
Mom.

*

THESE THINGS REMAIN

The meadows lush with Springtime
And birdsong sounding gay,
The golden tints of Autumn,
Trees in their green array.

The song of running water,
Fresh green of springing grain,
The gleam of new turned furrows
Sweet-smelling, after rain.

Cows grazing in a pasture,
Trails through a winter wood,
The busy stir of harvest,
We know that these are good.

These things shall last the lifetime
Of this old, battered earth,
After the war's mad frenzy
These are the things of worth.

E. DOWSON

FOR BLAKE

Your day was brief, the sun you hardly knew,
Cool, morning air of youth your lungs inhaled;
You walked the forenoon earth, still damp with
dew,

Knew not the world that later hours regaled.
For those whom God decreed should still remain
To witness sunrise, sunset, night and day.
Night's calm nor daylight's warmth shall quell
the pain
Of knowledge that a friend has passed away.

G. W. P.

*

SOLDIER'S ANTHEM

O Canada, My Canada!
How I long to see your shore
Rise out of the sea, and grow
Till our ship, no longer large,
Slips into your welcome arms.

To feel your soil beneath my feet before
I mount an iron steed, and speed
Across your vast domain
Till I am home again
In Canada, My Canada.

JACK SEMCZUK

TO THEIR FUTURE

What does he want who home returns?
What are the things for which he yearns?
I ask this question day by day,
And this is what they mostly say:

The loving embrace of a wife,
Little children to share their life,
A home that is in fact secure,
A peace on earth that will endure,
Time to work and time to play,
A chance to have a holiday,
The opportunity to acquire
Enough of world's goods to retire,
To live, but in a modest way,
To help some fellow every day,
And strive to build a strong foundation
For an ever-growing nation.

These are the things of which they speak,
No nobler theme could you seek.
They left as boys, now they are men,
Grant soon they may be home again.
For life and love await them there,
And no place can with Home compare.

G. R. SIMPSON

ABOUT P.O.W.'S

I wonder what they think and dream
Inside that Compound wire,
For they are human with their love,
And hate, and heart's desire.

These men have steered a lurching tank;
Dropped bombs on London town,
And from the lurking submarine
Have sent our convoys down.

Wearing that alien uniform
That we were taught to dread,
They do not look so fearsome now.
And somehow hate lies dead.

I understand that far-off look—
I know their anxious yearning;
My loved ones, too, are far away
And my heart, too, is burning.

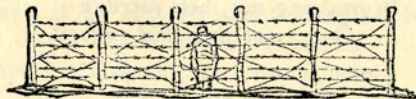
But as I sit and ponder
Upon their dastard feats,
Pity dies within me.
And red-hot anger beats.

They bombed our open cities—
(My kindred lived in one),
And shot at helpless refugees
Where war-torn roadways run.

They sank the lone tramp steamer,
And as she settled down,
Turned loose their fire on open boats
To watch our seamen drown.

So as I watch the prisoners
Inside the Compound gate,
And know their deeds to me and mine—
Have I not cause to hate?

E. A. DOWSON



« FIRST »

First in training for battle,
First in tactics of war;
First in sounding the rattle
Of Death, at Germany's door.
First and foremost in struggle,
First to settle the score—
First Canadian Army
And First Canadian Corps.

J. L. W.

REQUEST OF THE FALLEN

We lay them down in foreign lands
Beneath the cold, damp sod;
Their work on earth accomplished,
Their souls we give to God.

Brave lads of our Dominion,
From east unto the west
Begrudging not their sacrifice—
God grant their last request.

Let not future generations
As they journey on through life.
Be called upon to settle
Another world of strife.

Give nations, Lord, the power
Of vision strong, to see
That a world of friendly neighbors
A peaceful world would be.

Let men heed not to color,
Nor criticize of creed;
Abolish, Good Lord, from them
Their greatest foe—of greed.

Then we, Thy sons, the fallen,
That Freedom might remain,
Will sleep in peace well knowing,
We have not died in vain.

J. W. OLDFORD

*

MOTHER

There's a breathless hush in the room tonight,
There's an air raid on, and heavens are bright,
The sky in full of smoke and planes
Shrapnel is dropping on country lanes.

The power is off, Black fills the night,
But somewhere, near me, I see a light
Your picture stands beside my bed—
A radiant halo round your head.

It seems to brighten up the room,
When you are near, there is no gloom,
Your picture is all I have left, you see,
But I feel that it is protecting me.

The raid is over — the light beams bright;
I kneel, and pray, with all my might;
I pray that you will ever be
There when danger threatens me.

E. C. C.

WOMEN OF ROME

Raven-black tresses, perfumed and sweet,
Beckoning sloe-eyes, alive yet asleep;
Free-flowing hips with serpentine sway,
Thighs framed by shadows forever at play;
Beauties unequalled 'neath Heaven's blue dome,
You gladdening, maddening women of Rome.

G. H. ADLAM

*

GRUB GRIPE

Of all mysterious dishes, we
Award the palm to « M and V ».
Whate'er the ingredients, on the whole 'tis
Next-of-kin to linseed poultice.

No fouler bird exists, I ween,
Than « Chicken a la Argentine ».
My blueprint for Utopia's brief—
Eliminate all bully-beef.

VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

PEACE IN WAR

It's peaceful in the twilight
As the shades of eve come down,
And all is hushed and quiet
Throughout the mountain town.

There is something 'bout this hour,
Controlled by God's own hand,
As though to bring a spell of peace
To a heaving, shell-rocked land.

The dogs of war, exhausted.
Have lay them down to rest;
'Tis the hour of the evening
That the soldier loves the best.

And sitting in the twilight
Beneath the heavenly dome,
A soldier's thoughts are not of war,
But of a far-off home.

We are thankful, Lord in Heaven,
For the hour that You've set
For us to dwell on days of yore
In peace — lest we forget.

J. W. OLDFORD

'T WAS NOT IN VAIN

Once more we have our « Flanders Field »—
Again the poppies grow,
And like the last great fight, we see
The crosses row on row;
For brave men lie 'neath foreign soil
In lasting peace and free from toil.

Who knows their thought as they passed on
To that Great Land above?
With dimming eyes I'm sure they saw
Their homes — the ones they loved;
They gave up life, the price supreme,
To rid the world of a madman's dream.

How gallantly they fought and died;
Their last wish was that we
Would carry on; they knew some day
They'd share our victory;
So we'll keep faith and thus they'll know
They helped make peace on Earth below.

As in the last war, so in this,
God calls men to his side,
They'll live in joy eternal—
We'll think of them with pride;
And well we may, they gave up all
That good might live and evil fall.

So sleep, brave warriors, you must know
The years can never dim
Your mem'ry, valor, sacrifice,
As now you rest with Him.
We'll make a world where free folk reign,
And then you'll know—'twas not in vain.

GEORGE DOWNIE

*

IN MEMORIAM

*(This verse was written by the wife of a
sergeant in the Ld SH who was killed during
Melfa River action).*

It seems he was too young to die
Yet had he lived a normal span
Could he have left a finer record?
Would he have died a better man?

He has gone out to meet his Maker,
Full of the charity of Youth,
Serving his fellows boldly, bravely,
Fighting a battle for the Truth.

Many an old and hardened heart
Would envy him — his youthful fame
His dear, brief life, his ardent soul,
His noble end, his honored name.

FROM THE
ROYAL CANADIAN AIRFORCE
TO THE
ACTIVE CANADIAN ARMY
[Volunteers All]

(This prophetic verse, written over two years ago, is a tribute in rhyme that came from the pen of W-Commander Creed, RCAF).

For you, our pals in battledress,
It's time to take a bow;
We'll tell the world, in this man's war
You've done a job—and how!
It hasn't been an easy job,
As we who've watched you know;
Nor have you shared our luck, as yet,
Your stuff in full to show.
You've had to work like hell and wait
For two long years and more,
Nor has Publicity's acclaim
Held much for you in store.
But when your leash is slipped, my lads,
By all the Gods of War
The Hun will find out, to his cost,
What you've been waiting for.

On you, our pals in battledress,
We airmen must depend—

For what it takes us to begin
Is up to you to end!
Your tanks and your artillery,
Your armored cars and guns,
Will clear the earth as we the sky,
Of Hitler and his Huns.
And every bomb we drop is just
A warning in advance
That he who's lost shirt to us,
To you will lose his pants!
While we who bear the torch aloft
May play the opening role,
The cause of Freedom, in your hands
Will reach its final goal.

To all our pals in battledress
From us in air force blue,
Here's luck and best of hunting
To the last jack man of you!
The way things look to us right now,
It won't be very long
Before in person, you'll collect
For comrades of Hong Kong.
For every khaki-clad Canuck
Who made the sacrifice,
The Prince of Darkness and his friends
Will pay a bitter price.
And Bertchesgarten's bogus seer
Will finally confess—
«I might have licked the world but for
These men in battledress!».

SOURCE OF STRENGTH

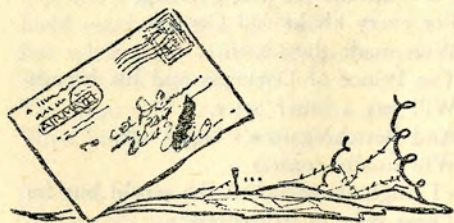
Whence comes our strength to live and fight,
And face monotony of war?
What changes doubtful dawn to light
And gives us will to do yet more?

The choking dust, the burning heat.
The ever-present threat of death;
The stench, the blood, no quiet retreat,
All threaten our desire for breath.

Then comes the balm, the healing cup
To smooth away the lines of hate,
The little note that cheers us up
And tells us 'courage dear, we wait'.

The news from home, those precious lines,
From loved ones many miles away,
Instils our weary, tattered minds
With courage for another day.

G. H. ADLAM



L'ENVOI

*(This poem, written by a soldier in France,
won the New York Herald (Paris Edition)
prize for the best poem written during World
War One).*

When I behold the tense and tragic night
Shrouding the earth in deep, symbolic gloom,
And, when I think that e'er my fancy's flight
Has passed the portals of the inner room

Where knighted hosts
Guard the sacred ark
Of brave romance,
Death may engulf me
In eternal dark. Still
I have no regret
Or poignant pain.

Better in one ecstatic, epic day
To strike my blow for liberty and truth,
With eager, singing heart to throw away
In freedom's holy cause my eager youth,
Than bear, as weary years pass one by one,
The knowledge of a sacred task— undone.

Forwarded by Pte. GEORGE A. THORNE

GUEST ARTIST

They brought Lily Pons and they brought Jascha Heifitz,
There was Irving Berlin and la belle Marlene Dietrich.
Bob Hope and Jack Haley came out here, I know,
With the purpose in mind of our own Army Show.
I saw the Tin Hats and the Forage Caps also;
I've heard singers (base) and chanteuses (contralto).
To morale-lifting agents I say simply, « Brother,
If you want real results — just you bring out my Mother! ».

J. DAWSON

*

Q.M. OVERSIGHT

A signalman out « on the loose »,
Met a WAAF who said, « Why you goose,
Your battledress pants
Remind me of France—
They're so much Toulon and Toulouse »

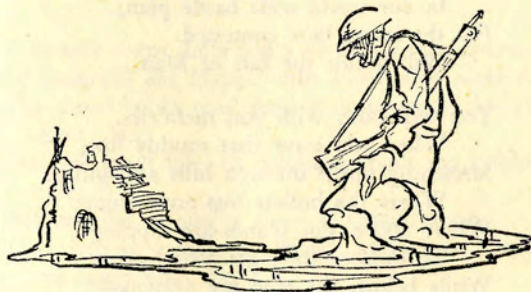
THOMAS GEOFFERY HANSON III

BLAME IT ON THE MUD

If you're ever short an alibi and worried as the deuce
And get that awful feeling that your neck is in a noose
Especially here in Italy there is always an excuse;
You can always put the blame upon the mud!

You'll be feeling plumb disgusted and your head
is bent with woe,
While the weather — far from freezing — feels
like twenty-five below.
If the cooks have fed you bullybeef for three meals
in a row;
You can always put the blame upon the mud.

M. ST. C. STERLING



BEYOND ST. VITO ROAD

(Dedicated to Major Paul Triquet, VC, and his men).

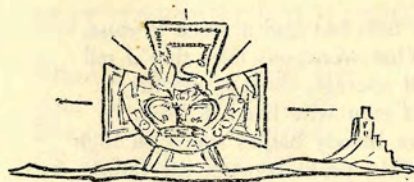
If you travel to St. Vito,
Turning northward by the sea,
You will soon near the crescendo
Of our field artillery.
You will feel the earth a-trembling
With shell and bomb and mine,
You will know the Hun is short'ning,
Once again, his Winter line.

Puffs of smoke will be arising
East to west along the line,
And our troops will be advancing
In the face of shell and mine.
This one sector must be wrested
In our world-wide battle plan;
For the issues here contested
Will decide the fate of Man.

You will carry with you mem'ries,
When you leave that muddy line,
Stretching north through hills and gullies
Where the bullets hiss and whine;
Where above, our planes are dipping
To unloose their precious load,
While below, the men are praying—
Just beyond St. Vito road.

You'll praise the gallant infantry
Who climbed the steep terrain
To storm Ortona by the sea,
In mud, and frost and rain;
You'll say a prayer for all the youth
That dwells in Death's abode,
Who gave their all for God and Truth
Beyond St. Vito road.

J. M. COLLING



ON BAEDEKER

They talk about Italia and a Mediterranean cruise—
Of beautiful old Napoli with superlovely views;
The travel books may shower praise upon this ancient place,
And tell great tales of conquest about the mighty race;
But traveller, if you've a yen old Italy to see,
Then help yourself, my friend, and please accept
my share from me.

L. C. PILKINGTON

CASSINO

The dusky hills roll back from plains,
Mysterious, silent, eerie,
Held in their rocky crags remains
The secret of the Liri.
For blood ran red and stained the snow—
The dead lie on the plains below

If hills but had a voice to raise,
What wondrous tales they'd tell
Of courage, daring, sacrifice,
Of men who lived in Hell.
For bloody battles raged on high
'Midst peaks beneath the Italian sky.

One spot we know will
In constant memory stay—
Cassino, Monastery Hill,
And the price we had to pay.
But pay we did, and told a world
That Freedom's flag would stay unfurled

To those who saw that shattered mound
Where once a town had stood,
The stench of death, the gaping ground,
The charred and splintered wood
All told a story, sad yet true,
Of what a world at war can do.

Thus, when I saw those blackened trees,
Their shattered limbs outflung,
I thought, like hills, they cannot speak,
Yet witnessed feats unsung.
And many deeds of valor will
Be locked forever in « That Hill ».

GEORGE DOWNIE

*

SLIT TRENCH SOLILOQUY

When I am in the front line
And shells go whistling by,
I've often said it to myself
I'd sooner live than die.

E. J. CAUGHTY

*

HAUNTING PHRASE

The war at long last was all over,
The ship steamed for Canada's shores;
When land loomed up over the skyline
The heavens were rent with men's roars.

But the pleasure was just a short-lived one,
And the men's hearts soon fell to their boots,
For a sign could be seen at the port's mouth—
« Out of Bounds to Canadian Troops ».

S. EVANS

DO YOU WONDER

Do you wonder that the sky is blue,
The foliage green, the birds that fly
From tree to tree the whole day through,
Despite the guns that roar nearby?

Do you wonder why the children play
Amidst the rubble of the street,
While oxen grope their lazy way.
And sheep repeat their mournful bleat?

Do you wonder why love is so strong,
Between the lover and his maid
In such a world which has gone wrong,
Where human nature is betrayed?

Do not wonder. 'Tis God's plan.
War cannot kill those good desires,
Which are the heritage of man,
And shall outlast all proud empires.

Man's spirit shall remain the same,
Despite the ruins of fire and sword;
Man shall win back his place again.
Oh, haste the day, we pray Good Lord.

J. M. C.

PRAYER BEFORE BATTLE

(Major Campbell was killed in Italy, Christmas Day, 1943, fighting with his regiment. His father was killed Christmas Day, 1916, fighting with the Royal Canadian Regiment in the other war. When they searched the body of Major Campbell where he fell, they found a slip of paper on which this poem was written).

When, 'neath the rumble of the guns,
I lead my men against the Huns;
It's then I feel so all alone; and weak and scared.
And oft I wonder how I dared
Accept the task of leading men.

I wonder, worry, fret, and then... I pray;
Oh God; Who promised oft
To humble man, to lend an ear;
Now, in my troubled state of mind,
Draw near, oh God; Draw near... draw near.

Make me more willing to obey
Help me to merit my command.
And, if this be my fatal day
Reach out, oh God, Thy helping hand
And lead me down that deep, dark vale.

These men of mine must never know
How much afraid I really am!
Help me to lead them, in the fight,
So they will say... « He was a man! ».

MAJ. ALEX. R. CAMPBELL

RESIGNED

Five years in the army
Has left me unfussy,
I eat what I'm given,
Squire sweet-thing or hussy;
I'm subjected to needles,
And never complain
If I foot-slog it out
In the sunshine or rain.
I hail from the east—
I'd take no one to task
If they sent me to Gregg (Man.)
Or Swift Current (Sask.)
I'd willingly travel
Across a rough sea
E'en if the boat headed
For Work Point (B.C.)
I wouldn't resist
Nor would I halt a
Plan to fly me
To Grassy Lake (Alta.)
I wouldn't say « No »
(Though it's not what I want)
To a trip that would take me
To Sharp Corners (Ont.)
For Salem (N.S.)
Or Salt Springs (N.B.)
I wouldn't run over
With absolute glee;

But because I'm not fussy
I'd still heave a sigh
To see either place
Or Tignish (P.E.I.)
But should I regain
Pre-war's fussier view,
I'll hold out for home—
Kazabazua (P.Q.)

JEAN-BAPTISTE

*

NOSTALGIA

When do I miss you most? When evening comes
And twilight falls as gently as your touch,
While all my thoughts turn homeward in the
gloom?
Or in the deep of night? When there is such
Oppressive silence that the darkness hums
With tiny sounds, inaudible by day,
And ghosts of memory march across my room?
Or in the sun-drenched morning, when clouds play
Games with the breeze that blows in from the sea;
The blue sky smiling at their childish zest
As you, my dear, have often smiled at me?
What other hours are there? Name the rest;
It matters not, for of the twenty-four,
Each passing hour I miss you that much more.

R. E. B.

« CIVIL ENGINEERING »

The day is not so distant when
You'll be on civvie street again,
The time is coming when you'll be
Back with your friends and family
So have you taken time out yet
To brush up on your etiquette?
Your manners must be polished, too,
Instead of brass and army shoe;
You're gonna find it isn't easy
Behaving like a Canadese.
For instance, you must sit to eat
And through the meal you keep your seat.
Never, never, never, reach
Across the table for a peach.
Remember that a civvie lives
On butter with no adjectives.
There is no line-up, no delay,
You get your meals three times a day;
When walking down the avenue
The greeting is « How do you do? »
But when an officer goes by
Just tip your hat and holler « Hi! »
Remember that the corner store
Has garden vegetables galore
Stealing 'taters from your neighbor
Leads to six months with hard labor.
Flogging blankets is taboo—
Remember, they belong to you.
You can wave a « buona sera »

To the phoney Itie Lira;
Bid welcome to Canadian change,
Even though you'll find it strange.
Bathtubs, toilets, kitchen sinks.
Fresh cow's milk and bottled drinks,
Revolving doors and escalators,
Restaurants with aproned waiters—
A new world opens up for you,
The door is wide—and what a view!
But don't dare think it a pushover,
There's lots of weeds among the clover;
Take warning, ladies, whose hearts are
yearning
For your menfolk's home returning;
Pause a while in your elation—
Prepare yourselves for transformation.

CHARLES KING (PPCLI)

*

REHABILITATION

I think I'll marry the Itie girl
From the house where we buy all our eggs,
The girl with the powerful shoulders,
The girl with the chorus girl legs.
She's dirty, she's ragged, she's barefoot,
And her long matted hair is a sight.
I know she no speaka da Eengglessh,
And perhaps, she can't even write.

But she'll work... every day she is working
From dawn till the lamplight burns out.
She's a body by Fisher, and a chassis
That out-Grables Grable, no doubt.

And so, when this old war is over
I will marry Maria, I will.
And I'll homestead a lot in Alberta
For a farm, and a place for a still.
My Marie will tend to the chickens
And pasture the cow and the horse,
And do all the planting and reaping
And the spring and fall plowing, of course.
And I'll live like a king in a castle,
Making lots of my own favorite brew,
With a pipe and an old pair of slippers,
And perhaps, some tobacco to chew.

And there won't be no work for yours truly
'Twill be day after day filled with rest,
While Maria keeps busy at farming,
And the cooking — which won't be the best,
For I don't like the thought of spaghetti
At dinner and supper as well.
And the tea will be boiled till it's bitter,
And the porridge won't be any hell.
But I'm sure I'll get used to her vittles,
For I'll teach her a few kitchen tricks,
And I'll live like a king in a castle
On a lot, in a shack, in the sticks.

SSM A. A. FERRIS

THAT LITTLE LAND

*(Written originally for « Crystal Ball »,
born within folds of 5th Medium Regt.,
RCA, at Ionia, Sicily).*

I sat on the stone of a terrace wall
Hearing the noises great and small;
The distant clock, a nearer tone
Of the sentry's feet on the cobblestones,
The drone of an aeroplane overhead,
A bird song from a cactus bed.
I saw the bird with its ruddy breast,
An English robin I almost guessed.
Then, my heart went back to the Surrey hills,
The silent pools, the water mills,
A hamlet sleeping in the sun,
Creeping dusk when the day is done,
The firelight on two faces small
Watching shadows on the wall,
The nights I carried the two to bed
Tucked them in and sometimes read
Of fairy princes and pretty queens
Until they entered the land of dreams.
Here I am 'neath a Southern sky,
The minutes and hours drifting by.
But I wish for England's damp and chill,
For half my heart is in England still.

Forwarded by CPL. WHEELOCK

THE LIVELY LADY

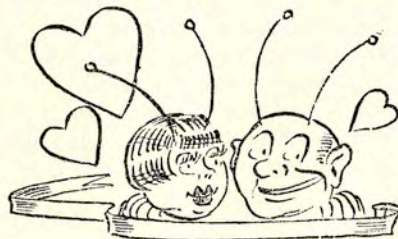
A foreign Prince did once import,
A flea with sex appeal;
Her antics were a treat to watch,
Her name it was Lucille.

But she lived for love, and love alone,
Celibacy was not her state;
And soon she found that which she sought;
A true and loving mate.

Conventional things then soon occurred,
They raised a family;
Then they in turn all married,
And lived most happily.

Today you find them everywhere,
They play and jump and flirt;
I even found a loving pair,
Making whoopee in my shirt.

G. R. SIMPSON



SOLDIERS MAY DREAM

There's a trail I know through a belt of bush,
Where poplar and willow sway.
And the cranberries show like a splash of flame
Gleaming red on an Autumn day.

One day I'll wander there again,
By the bank of a Western river,
Where Nature's ways all teach the creed
That all life lives forever.

I'll catch once more in that land of peace,
Old sights and smells that I know:
The new turned furrow, the scent of spruce,
The Northern Lights aglow,

The Spring thaw, and the ploughing rain.
The ooze of April mud:
After Winter's frozen fastnesses
We know that these are good.

These are the things of a soldier's dreams,
These are the things of worth.
And these shall gladden a soldier's heart,
When Peace shall fill the Earth.

ERIC A. DOWSON

HOMeward FLIGHT

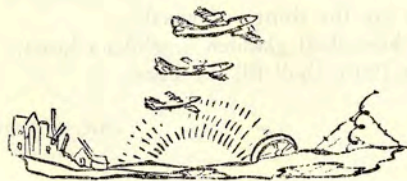
Through the night, towards the dawn,
The scattered squadrons fly
Proud and swift and beautiful,
Against the flame-flushed sky.

On edges of the morning,
As stars grow softly pale,
A company of warriors
Upon the homeward trail.

Below the fields of Europe—
A wrinkled map outspread,
England somewhere in the mist—
A sea of cloud ahead.

Battle-scarred, their task accomplished
And their duty done—
On their wings the sudden glory
Of the rising sun.

C. CALLAN



BLOW GENTLY, GOOD WIND

Blow gently, good wind, from over the sea,
Fanning the leaves of the cherry tree,
Cooling desires of the bumble bee;
Blow gently, good wind.

Over the fields of ripening grain,
Hasten the coming of cooling rain,
Whisper the hope of harvest again;
Blow steady, good wind.

Chasing the clouds over the peaks,
Where lonely monk his vigil keeps,
Down to the earth, where shepherd seeks
Solace from you, good wind.

Pausing to bless the poppies red.
Spreading their beauty over the dead,
Scattering incense over their bed;
You kind, good wind.

Blow gently, good wind, from over the sea;
How mankind longs, like you, to be free.
Your secret lies in your will to be
A gentle, good wind.

« J » (Italy, '44)

A CANUCK IN ITALY

*(Written by an unknown Canuck while
in action at Rimini).*

Death, gloating in its shroud, did cover me,
Tempting my tired soul to gain its rest.
« Rise from this wet and mud-bound sea,
What matters if you fall—to gain the crest? »

« Crawling, stumbling, blindly falling,
Groping for the top.
For what, you idiotic fool! Does rest deter you not?
Is not this pain, the price that greed has wrought?
Why struggle on to lose that which you sought? »

Then, light! Oh, brilliant, dazzling beam!
You spectrum of a soldier's dream,
Bursting forth to free my soul,
Through closed, pink lids I saw my goal.

Excelling all in simplicity
Stood Christ on a cross—humanity.

BEAUTY ABROAD

The streets of Rome
Are paved,
Indeed,
With belles of ev'ry
Race and
Creed.

But just today
I saw a
Beauty—
An ATS out
Here on
Duty.

Though Roman gals
Are molta
Bella,
They don't compare
With Pte.
Stella.

W. EALING



ODE TO UNSUNG POETS

What talent undiscovered lies
Beneath the warrior's lowering brow
What gentle wit, what thought so wise,
Becomes apparent to us now.

For spring her hand hath softly laid
On those who'll hear her whispered news
And man of steel and tender maid
Set out to woo the ancient muse.

Fill up, fill up the flowing bowl
And then with Omar drain the can,
Unloose the pent-up flow of soul
And gambol with the godless Pan.

Let spring her fires within you light
And may you in your brimming glass
See lines you ne'er before could write
And glimpses of a favourite lass.

G. R. H. ROSS

*

SHORT COMINGS

Christmas comes but once a year
So does the turkey and so does the beer.

JOE ZILCH

VERILY, A TRAGEDY

Their blood ran cold with horror
As they gazed on the awful scene.
Their faces paled with anguish,
And their gills turned faintly green.
For seldom has anyone suffered
As they did that horrible night.
Seldom before have humans
Beheld such a ghastly sight.
There on the ground before them
The shattered remnants lay,
And a steady stream of crimson
Seeped into the thirsty clay.
And they stood in breathless silence
As men who were stricken dumb,
For they'd just seen the sergeant major.
Break a jug of issue rum.

SGT. D. MEADE (SEAFORTH'S)



OUR BOYS

These are our boys—

The boys who lived next door or down the street,
The boys who whistled on their way to school,
Or else, with laggard feet,

Stopped to toss pebbles in a wayside pool,
Knock marbles 'gainst a fence or wall.

These are the boys

Whose names were written in our registers a few
short years ago;

Such little wide-eyed boys, just five or six or so,
Who, now to manhood grown, have heard the call
And answered with their lives if need be,

So that other little boys of five or six or so
May still be free

To whistle on their way to school,

Or, with reluctant feet,

Stop to toss pebbles in a wayside pool,

Play marbles on the street.

MARGARET NICKERSON



WAR

Shell-torn buildings line the sky,
Twisted trees waiting to die.

Pain-wracked bodies lying stark,
Flares and shell fire in the dark,

Unearthly wails and hideous moans,
A mortally wounded stirs and groans.

Slimy craters and splintered rocks,
Out in the dark a sniper stalks.

The air is filled with a tiger's roar
Clearing its throat of a clot of gore.

Hollow-eyed men strew the ground,
Dazed and battered by continual sound.

Shouts and screams, machine guns' rattle.
Never was there such a battle!

The night has ended, the day begun,
The objective reached, the fight is won.

The heads are counted, prayers are said,
And graves are dug for the scattered dead.

A letter home to hide a tear,

« Don't worry folks, all's quiet here ».

L-CPL. G. S. SHEILS

ODE TO A CANADIAN

He'll ruin your life, run off with your wife,
And think he is doing no wrong
He'll take you around if you lend him a pound,
And take all you have for a song.

He has a thousand-mile ranch that was left him
by chance
At the death of his old Uncle Josh.
He's a marvellous shot, and believe it or not
Is a wonder at breaking a hoss.

He's forgotten his wife, he'll be single for life,
With the boys he's a regular guy.
And he's got a life story that's covered with glory,
But he's much too wicked to die.

He'll gaze with a frown on old London town,
Saying, « Gee, what a helluva dump!
Why, back on my farm it would go in my barn! »
And your ego goes down with a bump.

He has personal charm that is meant to disarm
The unwary that gets in his way,
And, don't listen to him for he's only a whim,
And he'll surely lead you astray.

Though you know he's a liar your blood is on
fire,
As he whispers, « I love you so much ».
You go weak at the knees as he whispers « oh!
Please! »
And you feel his experienced touch.

Though you may regret it you'll never forget it,
Although it is breaking your heart
To think of the kisses that other young misses
May give him while you are apart.

Though he makes you so mad and often quite sad,
Still, you cannot send him away.
He's a real bad guy and a regular cad,
So why do you whisper, « Please Stay! »

He'll wed you, of course, when he gets his divorce,
But, while waiting, « Oh, Honey, why not? »
So, just think of this when he begs for a kiss,
That a pram costs a helluva lot.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



SOLILOQUY

I wander the hills without a care.
With no thought of the dark to come.
The church bells ring the evening prayer;
The day, its hours have spun.
The scene is one of peace and calm
Where once the battle raged.
A soothing, quiet, restful balm
The wounds of war have laved.

It brings to mind the fallen dead,
Those whose thirst of war did sate
Who know the taste of daily bread:
Love, toil, tears and hate.
« Oh will the lesson be never learned, »
The voice of our dead still cry,
« Again we throw the torch, once spurned,
If the light goes out—In vain we die. »

The night is here and darks the day,
Now, each footstep I must grope.
He sends a moon to guide the way,
Oh send our souls some hope!
How do we walk in this darkened Love
If even our dead know fright?
Oh mighty God of Peace and Power,
Keep the Torch of Justice alight.

F. MARKS

ON GOING HOME

Sometimes I think that I would like to sail
Across the westward sea and travel home;
And find you waiting there for me.
I'd like to see the widening surge of foam
Sweep from ship's stern to make a frothy trail
From these strange shores to those I know and
love;

To put behind me all this phantasy
Of man-made death—around, below, above,
And ruins everywhere; to move once more
In that small, happy world we knew,
Where everything was whole, complete; where war
Could never reach. But reason tells me true:
« The road to that world lies not to the West.
Push on! It lies beyond that shell-torn crest ».

R. E. B.

