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by Frank Oliver Call**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK IN A BELGIAN GARDEN, AND OTHER
POEMS ***

**IN A BELGIAN GARDEN
AND OTHER POEMS**

BY

F. O. CALL

**LONDON
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MCMXVII**

TO

E. H. G.

**THE BEST OF FRIENDS
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED**

Author's Note

Many of the poems in this volume have appeared before in various

publications and I wish to thank the editors of the "Canadian Magazine," the "University Magazine," the "Westminster," the "Canada West," and other periodicals for permission to reprint these verses.

F. O. C.

BISHOP'S COLLEGE,
LENNOXVILLE, CANADA.

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Introduction

Most of the poems contained in this collection are of recent date, though their author—who is at present Professor of Modern Languages at Bishop's College, Quebec—has written verse from his childhood. He is the first Canadian writer to be included in this series, and is as affectionately loyal to the Motherland as to his native country, as may be gathered from his "Song of the Homeland." His verse has already earned a considerable reputation in Canada, in whose Press much of it has appeared. Educated at Stanstead College, he took his degree at the University where he now lectures, and has also studied in Paris, Marburg and Switzerland. Several of his poems are concerned with the sorrow and the ravished beauty of Belgium: a circumstance not surprising, as he has travelled much in that country, as well as in France, Switzerland and Italy. A lover of country life and a disciple of the cult of the open road, he revels in the joys of camping and canoeing, as one of his poems, "Hidden Treasure," bears witness. In this little book, and more especially in the "Song of the Homeland," he shows us the maple leaf entwined, strongly as ever, with the English rose of the Mother country.

S. GERTRUDE FORD.

In a Belgian Garden

Once in a Belgian garden,
 (Ah, many months ago!)
I saw like pale Madonnas
 The tall white lilies blow.

Great poplars swayed and trembled
 Afar against the sky,
And green with flags and rushes
 The river wandered by.

Amid the waving wheatfields
 Glowed poppies blazing red,
And showering strange wild music
 A lark rose overhead.

* * * * *

The lark has ceased his singing,
 The wheat is trodden low,
And in the blood-stained garden
 No more the lilies blow.

And where green poplars trembled
 Stand shattered trunks instead,
And lines of small white crosses
 Keep guard above the dead.

For here brave lads and noble,
 From lands beyond the deep,
Beneath the small white crosses
 Have laid them down to sleep.

They laid them down with gladness
 Upon the alien plain,
That this same Belgian garden
 Might bud and bloom again.

A Lincolnshire Maiden

Long the eastern beaches,
 Where brown the seaweed grows,
And over broad salt meadows,
 The green tide ebbs and flows.

Above the low-roofed houses,
 Two ancient towers rise,
And stand like giant druids,
 Against the wind-swept skies.

Through mist or rain or sunshine,
 Their prows festooned with foam,
The fishing-boats go outward
 Or laden, turn them home.

She watches by the window,
 And tearless are her eyes;
She sees not church or tower,
 Or sea or wind-swept skies.

She sees not tide or tempest,
 Or sun or mist or rain;
Afar her spirit wanders
 Upon the Belgian plain.

Where over shell-scarred cities
 The mad, red tempest raves,
And poplars sigh and shudder

Above unnumbered graves.

Hidden Treasure

Sun-browned boy with the wondering eyes,
Do you see the blue of the summer skies?
Do you hear the song of the drowsy stream,
As it winds by the shore where the birches gleam?
Then come, come away
From the shadowy bay,
And we'll drift with the stream where the rapids play;
For we are two pirates, fierce and bold,
And we'll capture the hoard of the morning's gold.

A roving craft is our red canoe,
O pirate chief with the eyes of blue;
So hoist your flag with the skull on high,
And out we'll sail where the treasures lie.
For in days of old
Came pirates bold,
a Spanish galleon's captured gold;
And their boat was wrecked on the river strand
And its treasures strewn on the silver sand.

Now steady all as we dash along,
The rapids are swift but our paddles are strong;
And soon we'll drift with the water's flow
Where the treasure lies hid in the shallows below,
Oh, cool and dim,
'Neath its foam-flecked brim,
Is the pool where the swallows dip and skim;
So we'll plunge by the prow of our red canoe
For the treasure that lies in the quivering blue.

Now home once more to the shadowy bay,
For we've captured the gold of the summer's day,
And emeralds green from the banks along,
And the silver bars of the white-throat's song.
No pirates bore
Such a glittering store
From the treasure ships of the days of yore,
As the spoils we have won on the shining stream,
While we drifted along in a golden dream.

A River Sunset

Red sunlight fades from wood and town,
The western sky is crimson-dyed,
Gaunt shadow-ships drift silent down
Upon the river's gleaming tide.

The hills' clear outlines melt away
Or veil themselves in purple light,
And burning thoughts that vexed the day
Become fair visions of the night.

The Madonna

She shivered and crouched in the immigrant shed
In the midst of the surging crowd;
Her hands were warped with the years of toil,
And her young form bent and bowed.

Her eyes looked forth with a frightened glance
At the throng that round her pressed;
But her face was the face of the Mother of God
As she looked at the babe on her breast.

An Idol in a Shop Window

Old Lohan peers through the dusty glass,
From a jumble of curios quaint and rare;
And he watches the hurrying crowds that pass
The whole day long, through the ancient square.

Wrapped in his robe of gold and jade,
Here by the window he patiently waits
For the sound that the gongs and the conches made,
In the days of old at the temple gates.

He heaves no sighs and he sheds no tears,
For his heart is bronze, and he does not know
That his temple has been for a thousand years
But a mound of dust where the bamboos grow.

So here he sits through the nights and days,
And the sun goes up and down the sky;
But he often looks with a wistful gaze
At the crowds that always pass him by.

And his eyes half closed in a mystic dream
Of his poppy-land of long ago,
Turn back to the shores of the sacred stream
And the kneeling throng he used to know.

But he sometimes smiles as he sees the crowd
Of human folk that pass him by;
Then he wraps himself in his mystic shroud,—
And the sun once more goes down the sky.

Through a Long Cloister

Through a long cloister where the gloom of night
Lingers in sombre silence all the day,
Across worn pavements crumbling to decay
We wandered, blindly groping for the light.
A door swung wide, and splendour infinite
Streamed through the painted glass, and drove away
The lingering gloom from choir, nave and bay,
And a great minster's glory met our sight.

Blindly along life's cloister do we grope,
We seek a gate that leads to life immortal,
We see it loom before us dim and vast,
And doubt's dark shadows veil the light of hope:
When lo, Death's hand flings wide the sombre portal,
And light unfading meets our gaze at last.

The Chambly Rapid

There's a spirit in the rapid, calling, calling through the night,
There's a gleam upon the water, burning pale and burning bright.
Woe to him who hears the calling! Woe to him who sees the light!

My son and I had left St. Jean,
Our paddles dipping in the blue,
And many miles to north had gone
Along the silent Richelieu;
The night came down, we thought of rest;
A threatening cloud hung in the west.

No warning sound the river made
Save for the rapid's muffled roar,
As 'neath the pine-trees' deepening shade
We camped upon that luckless shore;
No sound the night-wind bore to me
Save one weird echo from Chambly.

The night grew dark and darker still,
The pale-faced moon was hid from sight,
When o'er the waters black and chill
We saw a ghastly, gleaming light,—
A fitful fire, pale and blue,
That burned my inmost spirit through.

And like some baleful gleaming eye
It shone beneath night's heavy pall;
Then high above the loon's lone cry
Afar we heard the spirit call;
It called us from the other shore.
Ah, Jean will never hear it more!

I could not seize or hold him back,
For while the light burned pale and blue,
A heavy hand from out the black
Held me beside my own canoe,
And ere I stirred, the other barque
Had silent sped into the dark.

Adown the river's drifting tide
To where the wild, mad rapids run,
Past pine-trees towering on each side
His frail canoe had drifted on;
He did not look to left or right
But gazed upon that hell-born light.

And ever swifter with the flow
He drifted where the rapids play,
His eyes still on that awful glow;
Ah, God! my life seemed snatched away!
I saw a gleam far up the sky
And heard the echo of a cry.

There's a spirit in the rapid, calling, calling through the night,
There's a gleam upon the water, burning pale and burning bright.
Woe to him who hears the calling! Woe to him who sees the light!

The Snowdrift

The snowflakes fell on a mountain peak,
Where the rocks were bare and the winds were bleak,
And at first they clung to the mountain's breast,
But soon they fell from its lofty crest,
And stained and soiled was the new-born snow

When it reached the valley far down below.

But up on the height one drift alone
Still firmly clung to the rugged stone,
And men in the gloomy vale below
Looked up and gazed on the shining snow,
And their darkened souls drank in the light
From the gleaming snow on the mountain height.

Unstained by the grime of the earthly vale,
Its white breast firm in the strongest gale,
It bravely clung to its lofty height
And gleamed afar with its glorious light,
Till kissed by the sun and the summer rain,
It rose in mist to the skies again.

On Mount Royal

I climb its sides when the day grows old
And its mighty shadow falls deep and wide,
And over the gleam of the sunset's gold
The darkness creeps like a rising tide;
And higher and higher up rocky height,
Past oaks that are gnarled by the winter's blast,
I climb till a marvellous vision of light
Breaks forth on my wondering sight at last.

Dome and spire of house of prayer,
Convent cloister gloomy and gray,
Street and market and bridge lie there
In the golden gleam of the dying day.
Yet here on the silent mountain crest
There echoes a moan and a smothered roar
From the tide of life in its strange unrest,
As it beats below on a barren shore.

The Vision

A vision came unto a saint of old
Of a fair city by a crystal stream,
Its gates of pearl, its streets of shining gold,—
Barbaric splendours of a mystic's dream.
There upon floating wings the white-robed throng
No man can number chant in endless song;
Across the tideless sea no shadow falls
To dim the glory of the sapphire walls,
Or mar the splendour of the throne-crowned height.

Ah love, the mystic's vision wakes to-night,
With all its glittering show and kingly pride,
No longing in a heart unsatisfied.
But oh, to walk with thee the river shore
As in the days gone by, the gold strewn o'er
The strand of primrose bloom, the water's flow,
Mingled with thy sweet voice in music low,
The angel song; to touch my lips to thine,
To hear the whispering of thy heart to mine,
And burning with a fire that never dies,
To see once more the love-light in thine eyes.

Ah, dim those far celestial splendours burn,
Gray grow the sapphire walls and gold-strewn ways
Before the vision of thy love's return
With all the unuttered joys of bygone days.

A Year Ago

The waters of the river gleamed as brightly
And murmured with the same untiring flow,
The branches of the birches tossed as lightly,
Among them sang the breeze as soft and low,
A year ago.

We sat beneath the white-stemmed birches bending
To reach the gurgling waters of the bay,
We saw the boats their courses seaward wending,
And earth seemed fair,—before us life's long day,
Night far away.

But often clouds would veil the sunlight over,
A moment cast a shadow and float by;
So stealthily above our hearts would hover
Sad thoughts to pause a moment, pass and die,
We knew not why.

We heeded not the moaning of the river,
Nor did the wind a whispered message bring;
Ah, now I know they murmured—part forever!
For that dull gloom above us hovering,
Was Death's dark wing.

Eternity

Eternity thou dark unbounded sea,
Upon whose tide we drift into the night,
One moment let us with our mortal sight
Pierce through the fogs and know thy mystery.
Voiceless thou art and voiceless wilt thou be,
Across thy still, cold deeps there comes no light,
While age and æon or a moment's flight
Pass on as one and vanish lost in thee.

Yet onward driven must our frail barques go,
Though through the night no beacon gleams afar,
And storm-clouds hide the steadfast guiding-star;
The purpose of our wandering and our woe,
A tide that wafts to some safe harbour bar,
O God, that we might know, might only know!

The Old School Bell

I can hear it calling, calling, sounding on the morning breeze,
As so often I have heard it call before,
And its ringing thrills my spirit as the wind the whispering trees,
But alas, I know for me it calls no more.
Ah, how sweet the memory lingers!
Though old Time's relentless fingers
Oft have turned the glass while flowed the sands away,
Yet I'd give the dearest treasure
Hardly gained from Fortune's measure,
Could I be a boy again for one short day.

I can see the gleaming river 'mid the willows winding blue,

I can hear the schoolboys shouting by the shore,
Then the bell begins its calling, echoing the valley through,
And the schoolboys turn toward the chapel door:
 Laggard footsteps, scarcely creeping,
 To the bell's low tolling keeping
Measured tread, as oft before my own have done;
Ah, the longing ceasing never
For a part in life's endeavour,
And to-day I count the gains that I have won!

I can hear it calling, calling, though its tongue no longer swings,
For within my heart its notes are ringing free,
As with silent step before me, Memory the old scene brings
And I think the old bell's voice is calling me.
 Then I see the old loved faces
 Grouped about their wonted places,
As the boyish voices chant their song of praise;
 Gone all thought of joy or sorrow,
 Loss to-day or gain to-morrow,
And I live again the life of other days.

On a Swiss Mountain

Lad, the mighty hills are calling,
Hills of promise gleaming bright,
And the floods of sunshine falling
Fill their deepest vales with light.

There the young dawn's golden fire
Beckons to a brighter day,
Untrod paths of youths' desire,
Heights unconquered far away.

Steep and dark and spectre-haunted
Winds the pathway to the height;
Sturdy youth with heart undaunted
Deems the toiling short and light.

Short or long, an easy Master,
Gives each tired toiler rest,
Counts not failure or disaster
If the striving be the best.

Go lad, go, 'tis Life that calls you,
Mates of old must soothe their pain,
Mindless of whate'er befalls you
If but honour still remain.

Rheims

In royal splendour rose the house of prayer,
Its mystic gloom arched over by the flight
Of soaring vault; above the nave's dim night
Rich gleamed the painted windows wondrous fair.
Sweet chimes and chanting mingled in the air;
Blue clouds of incense dimmed the vaulted height;
And on the altar, like a beacon light,
The gold cross glittered in the candles' glare.

To-day no bells, no choirs, no incense cloud,
For thou, O Rheims, art prey of evil powers;
But with a voice a thousand times more loud
Than siege-guns echoing round thy shattered towers,
Do thy mute bells to all the world proclaim

Thy martyred glory and thy foeman's shame.

The Mystic

The mystic sits by the sacred stream
Watching the sun as it mounts the sky;
And life to him is a haunting dream
Or a dim, weird pageant passing by.

Sorrow and joy go on their way,
Passion and lust and love and hate;
Only a band of mummers they,
Blindly led by the hand of fate.

Though the pageant is real, himself the dream,
Though men are born and strive and die,
Yet the mystic sits by the sacred stream
Watching the sun go down the sky.

A Song of the Homeland

I'll sing you a song of the Homeland,
Though the strains be of little worth,
A song of our own loved Homeland,
Of the noblest land upon earth;
Where the tide of the sea from oceans three
Beats high in its triple might,
Where the winds are born in a southern morn
And die in a polar night.

I'll sing you a song of the Eastland,
Of the land where our fathers died,
Where Saxon and Frank, their feuds long dead,
Are sleeping side by side;
Where their sons still toil on the hard-won soil
Of the mighty river plain,
Where the censer swings and the Angelus rings,
And the old faith lives again.

I'll sing you a song of the Westland
Where the magic cities rise,
And the prairies clothed with their golden grain
Stretch under the azure skies;
Where the mountains grim in the clouds grow dim
Far north in the arctic land,
And the northern light in its mystic flight
Flares over the golden strand.

And I'll sing of the *men* of the Homeland
From the north and east and west,
The men that go to the Homeland's call,
(Ah, God we have given our best!)
But not in vain are our heroes slain
If under the darkened skies,
All hand in hand from strand to strand
A sin-purged nation rise.

The Frozen Brook

The winter woods lie gray and still
Beneath the dreary sunless skies,
The brook that rippled down the hill
In summer hours, all silent lies.

And though its breast by ice is bound,
By bending low and listening long,
I hear a faint and far-off sound—
The echo of a summer song.

O weary heart, though cold and drear
The days along thy pathway seem,
To Nature's breast bend low thine ear
And listen to its pulsing stream.

The Indifferent Ones

Unmoved they sit by the stream of life
And its blood-red tide to the sea goes down,
While the hosts are borne through the surging strife
To a hero's death and a martyr's crown.

They pay no toll of their gold or blood;
For them 'tis a pageant and naught beside;
So they calmly dream by the reeking flood,
While the sun goes down in the crimson tide.

In a Forest

Silver birch and dusky pine,
Reaching up to find the light
From the forest's gloomy night,
From the thicket where entwined
Stunted shrub and creeping vine,
From the damp where witch-fire glows
And the poison fungus grows,
High you lift your heads, O trees,
To the kisses of the breeze,
To the far-off sapphire sky,
To the clouds that pass you by,
To the sun that shines on high.

From the dusk of earthly night
Strive, O soul, to reach the light.

The Ships of Memory

The silent ships of memory creep
Across the seas of long ago;
Like phantoms, on a tideless deep,
Their pale prows wander to and fro.

Some bear the dreams of happy years
Or bring a cargo all of gold;
Some bear a freight of useless tears,
For love and sorrow long untold.

And each man takes the proffered dower

For golden grain or bitter loss;
O, happy he that hath the power
To take the gold and leave the dross.

The Obelisk

(Place de la Concorde, Paris)

There rise the palace walls as fair to-day,
As when with arms and banners gleaming bright,
The pageantry of royal pomp and might
Passed through the guarded gates and went its way.
The blue, translucent beams of morning play
On arch triumphal, veiled in silver light;
And here, where blind, red fury reached its height,
An ancient column rises grim and gray.

Slumbering in mystic sleep it seems to be,
And dreaming dreams of Egypt long ago,
Unmindful of the ceaseless ebb and flow
About its feet of life's unresting sea;
But 'mid the roar, I hear it murmur low:
Poor fools, they know not all is vanity!

The Parting Ways

We trod together pleasant ways;
The earth was fair and blue the sky;
Clear were the nights and bright the days
And life was joy, for you were nigh.

To-day the road looks steep and grim,
And shadows fall on every side,
The sun grows strangely blurred and dim—
For in this place our paths divide.

Calvary

The women stood and watched while thick, black night
Enclosed the awful tragedy. Afar
Three crosses stood, against a single bar
Of crimson-glowing, black-encircled light.
No hint of Easter dawn. In all the height
Of that dark heaven, not a single star
To whisper;—Love and Life the victors are.
It seemed to them that wrong had conquered right.

O ye who watch and wait, the night is long.
A curtain of spun fire and woven gloom
Across the mighty tragedy is drawn.
But soon your ears shall hear a triumph song,
And golden light shall touch each sacred tomb,
And voices shout at last—The Dawn! The Dawn!

The Golden Bowl

On seeing a picture of a boy gazing at a golden bowl,
which, among Eastern nations, was a symbol of life.

In a dream he seems to lie
Gazing at the golden bowl,
Where dim visions passing by
Whisper vaguely to his soul.

Restless phantoms come and go
Crowned with cypress or with bays;
Sad or merry, swift or slow,
Tread they through the mystic maze.

Still the pageant winds along,
Youth and age and love and lust,
Till at last the motley throng
Fades and crumbles into dust.

All in vain upon the bowl
Gaze the wondering, boyish eyes;
He shall read its hidden scroll
Only when it shattered lies.

For a wondrous light shall gleam
From the scattered fragments born.
Boy, dream on, for life's a dream,
Followed by a golden morn.

The Lace-Maker of Bruges

Her age-worn hands upon her apron lie
Idle and still. Against the sunset glow
Tall poplars stand and silent barges go
Along the green canal that wanders by.
A lean, red finger pointing to the sky,
The spire of Notre Dame. Above a row
Of dim, gray arches where the sunbeams die,
The ancient belfry guards the square below.

One August eve she stood in that same square
And gazed and listened, proud beneath her tears,
To see her soldier passing down the street.
To-night the beat of drums and trumpets' blare
With bursts of fiendish music smite her ears,
And mingle with the tread of trampling feet.

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