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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SONGS OF HEROIC DAYS ***

SONGS OF HEROIC DAYS

By

THOMAS O'HAGAN

Author of

A Gate of Flowers
In Dreamland
Songs of the Settlement
In the Heart of the Meadow
and Others

Toronto:
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1916

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by Thomas O'Hagan

TO THE BRAVE CANADIAN HEARTS
THAT BEAT AND BATTLE FOR THE
CAUSE OF FREEDOM AND THE SAFETY
OF THE EMPIRE.

PREFACE

Nearly all these Poems have appeared during the past year in the columns of the *Globe* and the *Mail* and *Empire* of Toronto, and the *Free Press* of Detroit, Michigan.

When the Author read from his poems last winter before the Women's Press Club of Toronto one of its members suggested that an engrossed and illuminated copy of the poem, "I Take Off My Hat to Albert," be presented to His Majesty, King Albert of Belgium. This was done through the kind offices and courtesy of Mr. Goor, the Belgian Consul-General at Ottawa.

His Majesty's gracious letter of acceptance, which the reader will find on another page, is indeed a Royal Foreword to these poetic blossoms of a piteous though heroic time.

THOMAS O'HAGAN
January 20th, 1916.

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LETTER FROM THE KING OF BELGIUM

LETTER FROM THE KING OF BELGIUM

La Panne, le 11 Août 1915



Secretariat
du Roi & de la Reine Monsieur le Docteur,

Vous avez eu, pour exprimer
votre sympathie au Roi, des paroles
d'une suavité de délicatesse, aus-
quelles Sa Majesté a été très sensible.
Le Souverain, qui a toujours
remarqué la joie enthousiaste dont
vous avez orné les Strophes composées
en Son honneur, me charge de vous
remercier vivement et de vous dire
qu'Il sera heureux de conserver ce
précieux souvenir

Recevez, je vous prie, Monsieur le
Docteur, l'assurance de ma considé-
ration distinguée

L'Excellent,

J. Ingenbleek

Monsieur le Docteur
Thomas O'Hagan
Ottawa.

Letter from the King of Belgium

TRANSLATION

LA PANNE, August 11th, 1915.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY TO THE KING AND
QUEEN (OF BELGIUM).

SIR:

The very delicate words you have found to express to the King your friendly feelings have greatly touched His Majesty.

The Sovereign, Who has much admired the beautiful illumination adorning the verses composed in His honor, commands me to thank you sincerely and to say that He will be glad to keep this valuable souvenir.

I have the honor to be

Sir

Your obedient Servant,

J. INGENBLEEK,
Secretary.

To DR. THOMAS O'HAGAN,
Ottawa.

I TAKE OFF MY HAT TO ALBERT

*Albert, King of Belgium, is the hero of the hour;
He's the greatest king in Europe, he's a royal arch and tower;
He is bigger in the trenches than the Kaiser on his Throne,
And the whole world loves him for the sorrows he has known:
So I take off my hat to Albert.*

*Defiance was his answer to the Teuton at his gate,
Then he buckled on his armor and pledged his soul to fate;
He stood between his people and the biggest Essen gun,
For he feared not shot nor shrapnel as his little army won:
So I take off my hat to Albert.*

*King of Belgium, Duke of Brabant, Count of Flanders, all in one;
Little Kingdom of the Belgae starr'd with honor in the sun!
You have won a place in history, of your deeds the world will sing,
But the glory of your nation is your dust-stained, fearless King:
So I take off my hat to Albert.*

For M. Goor.

THE KAISER'S FAVORITE POEMS

What are the Kaiser's favorite poems?

Well, now, you tax me hard:
I know the Kaiser's favorite drink
But do not know his bard;
I'm sure it is not Schiller
Who reigns in German homes.
Nor yet Olympian Goethe,
Who writes the Kaiser's poems.

Perhaps that Heinrich Heine
Has touched the Kaiser's soul;
Or Arndt with his trumpet call
Like a new conscription roll;
Or, Walther von der Vogelweide
With his nest in mythic domes,
Is the author and creator
Of the Kaiser's favorite poems.

If I saw the Kaiser's library
I'd know well what he reads—
The color of his fancy
And the prompter of his deeds:
I'd learn the depth and wisdom
Of his theories and his gnomes,
If I got but just a glance or two
At the Kaiser's favorite poems.

Then let us go to Essen,
Where the Kaiser's books are bound;
They are full of "steel" engravings—
All "best sellers" there are found;
For the Prussian soul and spirit
Speaks in rhythm thro' those tomes,
And these without a question,
Are the Kaiser's favorite poems.

For Rt. Hon. David Lloyd-George.

LOUVAIN

A shrine, where saints and scholars met
And held aloft the torch of truth,

Lies smouldering 'neath fair Brabant's skies,
A ruined heap—war's prize in sooth!
The Pilates of Teutonic blood
That fired the brand and flung the bomb
Now wash their hands of evil deed,
While all the world stands ghast and dumb.

Is this your culture, sons of Kant,
And ye who kneel 'round Goethe's throne?
To carry in your knapsacks death?
To feel for man nor ruth nor moan?
What 'vails it now your mighty guns
If God be mightier in the sky?
What 'vail your cities, walls and towers
If half your progress be a lie?

The smoking altars, ruined arch
Of ancient church and Gothic fane
Have felt the death stings of your shells,
And speak in pity thro' Louvain.
Wheel back your guns, your howitzers melt,
Forget your "World-Power's" cursed plan
And sign in peace and not in blood
Dread Sinai's pact 'twixt God and Man.

For His Eminence Cardinal Merrier.

THE KAISER'S BHOYS

O, the Kaiser's bhoys are marching, "nach Paris" they are going,
But they've sthopped to rest a minit at the Marne and at the Meuse;
And the Gordons and the Ministers are thryin' to entertain them,
For they've every kind of "record" that the Teutons want to choose;
They have battle cries that sounded for centuries in the Highlands,
They have war cries fierce and stirring as the breath of Munster gales;
They are shoutin' to the heavens, and they're shoutin' to the Kaiser,
"Faugh-a-ballagh!" sons of Odin, or we'll tie you up like bales.

O, the Kaiser's bhoys are dramin' of a naval base at Calais,
But they wakin' ivery mornin' full of sorrow and of gloom;
For the little Belgian sojers cut the dykes and flood their trenches,
And they find their dugouts only jist a bathtub or a tomb.
But they're makin' progress backward, "nach Berlin" they are going,
With their "Landsturms" and their "Land-wehrs,"
keepin' sthep in dim grey line;
And they'll know far more of Britain and her brood of lions snarlin',
When they find themselves "su Hause" jist beyant
"Die Wacht am Rhein."

For John E. Redmond, M.P.

MOTHERS

Through the vigils deep of the sable night
A mother sits in grief alone,
For her sons have gone to the battle front
And left on the hearth a crushing stone.
Beyond the stars that burn at night
She sees God's arm in pity reach;
It counsels patience, love and faith,
Heroic hearts and souls to teach.

The blue is spann'd and the tide goes out.
And the stars rain down a kindlier cheer;

And the mother turns from this throne of grief
To pierce the years with a joyous tear;
For duty born of a mother's heart
Fills all the rounds of our common day—
Yea, sheds its joy in the darkest night,
And fills with light each hidden way.

For Miss Ina Coolbrith.

IN THE TRENCHES

All day the guns belched fire and death
And filled the hours with gloom;
The fateful music smote the sky
In tremulous bars of doom;
But as the evening stars came forth
A truce to death and strife,
There rose from hearts of patriot love
A tender song of life.

A song of home and fireside
Swelled on the evening air,
And men forgot their battle line,
Its carnage and dark care;
The soldier dropp'd his rifle
And joined the choral song,
As high above the tide of war
It swept and pulsed along.

That night while sleeping where the stars
Look down upon the Meuse,
Where Teuton valor coped with Frank,
Where rained most deadly dews,
A soldier youth, in khaki clad,
Rock'd where the maples grow,
Smiled in his dream and saw again
The blue St. Lawrence flow.

For Miss Julia O'Sullivan.

THE CHRIST-CHILD

Across the waste, across the snow,
O the pity! O the pity!
Past sentinel of friend and foe
O the pity! O the pity!
Comes the Christ-Child clad in white
Through the storm-clouds of the night.
Bearing in His lily hands
Gift of peace to warring lands,
O the pity! O the pity!

"*Adeste fideles!*" sing the choirs
O the pity! O the pity!
Lurid flame the battle fires
O the pity! O the pity!
Shepherds hear the heavenly song,
Mid the strife and piteous wrong;
Peace on earth but not of men,
Peace that knows not crime nor sin.
O the pity! O the pity!

Lay your sceptres at His feet,
O the pity! O the pity!

Christ, the Babe of Bethlehem, greet,
O the pity! O the pity!
Legions stretched in battle line,
Saw the star and knew the sign,
Yet forgot that Christ was born
Prince of Peace, on Christmas morn,
O the pity! O the pity!

Christmas, 1914.

For Mrs. George McIntyre.

GOD'S NEW YEAR'S GIFT

What shall the coming year bring forth,
O Lord, who rulest the land?
For the navies of the sea and air
Are but stubble in Thy hand.
The battalions in the field go forth;
They arm in mighty line;
Do they kneel to know Thy holy will?
Have they asked from Thee a sign?

The kings invoke Thy holy name,
In their carnage and their strife;
But the purple gift it was Thine to give
Recks not of pity nor life:
For they're drunk with the wine of lustful power,
And seared with the sins of earth;
And their prayers and preachments now mock Thy name,
And make of Thy laws but mirth.

January 1, 1916.

For Duncan Campbell Scott.

TROUBLE IN THE LOUVRE

When the German troops were marching with the Uhlans far ahead,
The objective point being Paris, as the Berlin wireless said,
There was trouble in the Louvre, 'mong the paintings on the walls,
There were shoutings 'cross the centuries, there were
loud artistic calls;
"Mona Lisa" ceased her smiling and "The Banker and His Wife"
Turned to Millet's "Women Gleaning"—begged protection
for their life;
While "The Gypsy Girl" of Franz Hals, fearful of impending fate,
Roused "The Shepherds in Arcadia" with "The Hun is at the Gate!"

Then the panic spread on all sides till the battle of the Marne
Solved all danger of the looting, removed all need to warn;
Straight "The Lace Maker" from Flemish Bruges in the joyous choral led
Smiled at "Charles First of England" who had lost his crown and head;
For fear had left the Louvre when the Teutons turned in flight,
So they scanned the sky no longer for dread Zeppelins in the night.
And the paintings born of centuries touched by genius into life
Still are hanging in the Louvre 'mid war's clash and clang and strife.

For Edgar Guest.

"BOBS" OF KANDAHAR

"The body of 'Bobs' then lay in state until five o'clock, when it was interred in a crypt near-by those containing the bodies of Nelson and Wellington."—*Press Despatch*.

Who is he that cometh to join our mighty dead?
Is it "Bobs" of Kandahar the Empire's armies led?
Give him place, O Nation great! within your storied walls;
Within our heart his name shall rest, his ashes in St. Paul's.
Soldier of the Empire, Bobs of Kandahar!
Lay him near the hero of glorious Trafalgar!
Death has ta'en the shining sword he eye in duty drew;
Lay him near the Iron Duke of fateful Waterloo!

Soldier of the Empire, well thy work was done,
Fit thy sun had setting within sound and roar of gun;
Thy soul had vision of the years fraught with danger's woe,
And counsell'd arméd wisdom against a subtle foe;
Now thy task has ended, the splendor of thy sun,
Sheds its setting glory on the greater life begun,
From where the Maple stands in pride to India's torrid star,
Now, mourn an Empire's people for "Bobs" of Kandahar!

For Lady Aileen Mary Roberts.

SONG OF THE ZEPPELIN

I cleave the air through the murky night,
High o'er the forests and sleeping towns;
Below me drifts the shimmering light—
A glorious fresco on vale and downs;
My sea hath no billows nor rocky shores,
And only the winds disturb my soul;
I care not for those who slumber in death,
For my bomb is bloody and death my goal—
And all for the Vaterland!

Where the currents cross and the cruisers speed
I sail towards the North in a piteous sky;
I hear the night wind's surging note
As it mingles its requiem with the widow's cry.
Above me there streams a light from heaven,
But I bow my head and veil my eyes
As I plough the fields with my fateful keel
And sow the highways with tears and sighs—
And all for the Vaterland!

And hate is the banner I unfurl so wide
That its blood-dripp'd folds may catch the breeze;
That e'en from the balcony of heaven on high
May be seen this banner on all the seas.
No triumph of arms is my flight by night,
It is only a part of a murderous raid:
Dropping a bomb on an innocent child
Or a crowing babe in its cradle laid—
And all for the Vaterland!

For Thomas Walsh.

"SOCK IT TO 'EM"

"A Canadian lieutenant writes his mother from the front that what he most needs for the winter is good warm socks."—*Press Despatch*.

Yes, Wilhelm, sure you'll get it,
The storm is o'er your head;
It is bursting in the trenches
And you're just as good as dead.
You put your foot on Belgium
And defied your fate and doom,
And now the whole world hates you
And the cry is "Sock it to 'em!"

True, your Taubchens still are sailing,
But your battleships are not;
They are coop'd up in a corner
Save the submerg'd ones that fought.
You are saving time and fuel,
But you're sad and filled with gloom,
For the very winds are whispering
"Blow hard and sock it to 'em."

You have sought more spacious realm
In the free and genial sun:
Has your sceptre widened any
With the salvo of each gun?
Your "World-Power" seems to narrow,
And your hope lies in a tomb,
While dark Fate weaves your chaplet
And whispers "Sock it to 'em!"

For Theodore Botrel.

LANGEMARCK

A glory lights the skies of Flanders
Where the blood-stained fields lie bare,
Where the clouds of war have gathered,
Built their parapets in the air;
Halted stands the Teuton army,
Checked its onslaught at a sign;
Forward roll the warlike forces,
Sons of Canada in line.

Let them taste of Northern courage
Where the lordly maple grows;
Let them face the heroes nurtured
Where the stars have wed the snows;
We are sons of sires undaunted,
Children of the hills and plains;
Ours a courage born of duty,
Pluck and dash of many strains.

Tell it to our children's children
How Canadians saved the day;
Write it with the pen of history,
Sing it as a fireside lay;
How at Langemarck in Flanders,
Though the odds were eight to one,
Our Canadians stood unbroken,
Sword to sword, and gun to gun.

For Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

THE BUGLE CALL

Do you hear the call of our Mother,
From over the sea, from over the sea?
The call to her children, in every land;
To her sons on Afric's far-stretch'd veldt;
To her dark-skinned children on India's shore,
Whose souls are nourish'd on Aryan lore;
To her sons of the Northland where frosty stars
Glitter and shine like a helmet of Mars;
Do you hear the call of our Mother?

Do you hear the call of our Mother
From over the sea, from over the sea?
The call to Australia's legions strong,
That move with the might and stealth of a wave;
To the men of the camp and men of the field,
Whose courage has taught them never to yield;
To the men whose counsel has saved the State,
And thwarted the plans of impending fate;
Do you hear the call of our Mother?

Do you hear the call of our Mother
From over the sea, from over the sea?
To the little cot on the wind-swept hill;
To the lordly mansion in the city street;
To her sons who toil in the forest deep
Or bind the sheaves where the reapers reap;
To her children scattered far East and West;
To her sons who joy in her Freedom Blest;
Do you hear the call of our Mother?

For Major-General Sir Sam Hughes.

HIS MISSION

"A German will teach Irish at the University of Illinois, beginning in February, when Dr. Kuno E. Meyer of the University of Berlin will become visiting professor of the Celtic language and literature."—*Press Despatch.*

Go back, dear Kuno, to the Poles and Alsatians,
And teach them the language your nation has robbed;
Piece out their dreams of new glory and freedom;
Bring joy to the hearts where the children have sobbed.
We love the old Celtic tongue, vibrant with music,
As it speaks to our hearts thro' the chords of long years,
But we don't want your lessons, though laden with "*Kultur*,"
From a land where Alsatians and Poles are in tears.

Go back, Herr Professor, your mission is ended,
For, though your gifts are many, you are "*ausgespielt*";
Go back and receive your "*Kreuz von Eisen*,"
For we don't like the way that you're "*ausgebild't*."
The stars that burn with the true light of freedom,
In this giant new world, with its endless day,
Have nothing in common with your satellite planets,
And care not to shine on your Eagle's prey.

For Dr. Douglas Hyde.

ACHILLES' TOMB

Achilles awoke in his ancient tomb
Hard by the coast of Troy;
He rattled his armor now full of dust
And rubbed his eyes like a boy,
As he gazed on the ships of the allied fleet,
Ploughing the seas from afar,
Bent on their course to the Dardanelles
'Neath the light of Victory's star.

"Why, I've been asleep," Achilles said,
"On the windy plains of Troy;
Three thousand years have turned to dust
With their maddening mirth and joy;
Yet it seems but a day since Ilium fell,
Since Sinon spun out his tale,
And the Greeks returned from Tenedos
With a light and prosperous gale.

"Three thousand years is a long, long time,
But I'll doze for a thousand more;
For I'm sick of the bluff of the Teuton hosts
And the gas from each army corps.
So lay me down in my ancient tomb,
Where the Phrygian winds sweep by,
And I'll dream of the days when heroes fought,
'Round the lofty walls of Troy."

For Very Rev. W. R. Harris, D.D.

THE CHRISM OF KINGS

In the morn of the world, at the daybreak of time,
When Kingdoms were few and Empires unknown,
God searched for a Ruler to sceptre the land,
And gather the harvest from the seed He had sown.
He found a young Shepherd boy watching his flock
Where the mountains looked down on deep meadows of green;
He hailed the young Shepherd boy king of the land
And anointed his brow with a Chrism unseen.

He placed in his frail hands the sceptre of power,
And taught his young heart all the wisdom of love;
He gave him the vision of prophet and priest,
And dowered him with counsel and light from above.
But alas! came a day when the Shepherd forgot
And heaped on his realm all the woes that war brings,
And bartering his purple for the greed of his heart
He lost both the sceptre and Chrism of Kings.

For Miss Katherine Brégy.

TIPPERARY

(New version.)

I'm not going to Tipperary for I've better work to do,
I am dreaming of a new device to catch each German crew;
And when we've chased them thro' the deep, *Ach Gott!* what
fun there'll be
Rounding up the Teuton "subs" in the blue and vasty sea.
So, good-bye, Tipperary! Farewell, Slieve-na-mon!
I leave you for a season to chase the murderous Hun;
Von Tirpitz knows their hiding-place and I'll find out, too,
So, good-bye, Tipperary, till we've caught each pirate crew.

Then I'll go to Tipperary with its hills of emerald green,
Where the skies are full of splendor and each peasant girl a queen;
Where the men know naught but honor and where duty is their goal;
Where the shadows from the mountains are but sunlight to the soul.
So, good-bye, Tipperary, till we've rounded up each crew,
Then I'll turn my face to greet you for to you I'll e'er be true;
So I'm off to chase the pirates and the ocean aisles to sweep,
Ach Himmel, Tipperary! there'll be fun upon the deep.

For Rev. J. B. Bollard.

GATHER THE HARVEST

Gather the harvest though reaped in death,
Under the pale, pale moon;
For the lilies that joyed in the breath of morn
Shall know not the ardor of noon:
So, the souls that grow strong, in patriot love,
Shall be garnered on Death's dark field,
Ere the noontide rays have touched the vale
And burnished with gold life's shield.

Gather the harvest though reaped in death,
Where the sword has struck for Right,
And cleft a way for Freedom's path,
Through the dark and tremulous night:
For the golden grain on the altar flames
And lights each pilgrim throng,
As they meet in joy 'round that altar bright
Where Justice shall right each wrong.

For Miss Helen Merrill.

THE KAISER'S "PLACE IN THE SUN"

The Kaiser is seeking "a place in the Sun"
But I fear he'll have to wait,
Till another eclipse has dulled its face
And the Allies have woven his fate:
For the "spots" on the Sun are all occupied
With a race descended from Mars;
So there's no place in the heavens for *schrecklich* Wilhelm,
Not even among the Stars.

What boots it, Wilhelm, that your guns are big,
And your Zeppelins soar by night,
Since against you are leagued the earth and stars
And you're sure to lose in the fight.
You have drenched the world with heroic blood,
And stained the record of Man,
But you'll presently get your "place in the Sun,"
Yes, the hottest since time began,

For T. J. Murphy.

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