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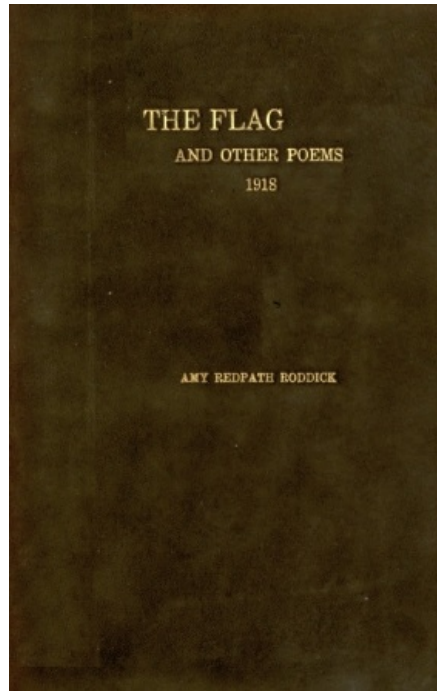
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FLAG, AND OTHER POEMS, 1918 ***



THE FLAG AND OTHER POEMS 1918

BY
AMY REDPATH RODDICK

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Montreal
JOHN DOUGALL & SON

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THE BRITISH LANDS.

The tie that binds the British lands
 Is never spun of tyrant's might;
 Of fair replies to just demands,
 Of compromise whenever right
 Is spun the fibre of its strands,
 A mighty Empire to unite.

A symbol is our gracious King
 Of British unity of heart,
 A simple man to whom we cling,
 Of all good men the counterpart.
 We sing to God to "Save the King,"
 And mean thereby ourselves in part.

The people of the British lands
 Are masters of their future fate,
 By effort of their mind and hands
 They glorify their Empire State,
 And, as the bud of thought expands,
 Can make new laws by calm debate.

The British Empire, may it be
 The nucleus of that larger league,
 Uniting every land and sea,
 Eschewing wars and false intrigue,
 May common sense and kindness be
 The crowning glory of that league!

THE FLAG.

Canada! where is thy flag,
 Welding race and race together?
 Union Jack, that wondrous rag,
 Dear to those who've trod the heather,
 Dear to those who love the rose,
 Blending Irish cross and nation
 With the crosses of old foes
 In a just and fair relation,
 Bears no emblem of the men,
 First to cross the stormy ocean,
 Bringing faith and plough and pen,
 First to know with deep emotion,
 Canada! thy name, as home.
 True, provincial arms commingle
 On thy flag o'er ships that roam;
 In their stead an emblem single,
 Maple leaf of golden hue,
 Would announce to all more proudly
 Whence thy ships their anchors drew;
 Would announce to all more loudly,
 Canada! thy nation's life;
 And on land, when bells are ringing
 To acclaim the end of strife,
 When with joy each heart is singing;
 Canada! is this thy flag?
 Welding race and race together,
 Waving from each roof and crag,
 East and West, one nation ever!

ENGLAND'S OLDEST COLONY.

[A] Newfoundland is proud to be
 England's oldest colony!
 Loving her dear motherland,
 By her side she takes her stand,
 Devon, Scotch and Irish stock,
 Sturdy as their seagirt rock,
 Leave their homes and leave their boats,
 Don the khaki-coloured coats.
 Newfoundland has fought and bled,
 Far and wide her fame has spread,
 Newfoundland is proud to be
 England's oldest colony!

Nine fair sisters in one home,
 With the North Pole on its dome,
 Facing both the East and West,
 And a friendly State abreast,
 Smile upon the lonely one.
 They have done as she has done,
 Fought and bled in freedom's cause,
 Won like her the world's applause.
 Will she join her home to theirs?
 No, her head in scorn she rears,
 Newfoundland is proud to be
 England's oldest colony!

But the offer's most sincere;
 And the offer's always there;
 Newfoundland may change her mind,
 And in time she too may find,
 Burdens shared are light to bear,
 Triumphs shared are doubly dear,
 She may gladly join the sheaf
 Bound around by maple leaf,
 Knowing well she still may boast,
 Answering her sisters' toast:
 "Newfoundland is proud to be
 England's oldest colony!"

[A] The name of "Newfoundland" is never pronounced by its inhabitants or their neighbors of the Maritime Provinces with the accent on the middle syllable, as is the usage elsewhere. It is pronounced as though written "Newf'n'land," with the principal stress on the last syllable.

IN FORT-BOUND METZ.

July 26th, 1914.

Neat uniformed, with close cropped head and fierce moustache,
Near us they dined one July day in fort-bound Metz.
We could not catch their words; but we could see and feel
Their strong excitement, breaking forth, then held in check,
Then breaking forth afresh as some new health was drunk.
The joy, imprinted on their faces, spread to ours.
We laughed in turn as they; but knew not why we laughed.
It was indeed a merry meal in which we shared,
That July day, in fort-bound Metz.
Next day, in France, we were to know at what we laughed
With those large built, full blooded German men of rank,
For when we asked a grieving woman why she wept,
She sobbed: "Because the Germans will make war on France!"

THE CALM THAT COMES WITH YEARS.

I cannot write of turmoil, I cannot write of strife,
Long since has gone the passion, I used to think was life.
A calmness rests upon me, a calm I cannot break,
Though worlds are trembling round me and freedom is at stake.

Because I have no sorrows, because my heart's at rest,
I cannot weep with others, whose hearts are not so blest;
I tremble for no hero upon the fields of France,
I cannot curse the Nero who planned this gory dance.

Though woman fast is winning her place in Council Halls,
By work where talent leads her, by work where mercy calls,
I feel no keen elation to know her triumph's near,
A triumph most unselfish, a heavier weight to bear.

The calm that rests upon me, the calm that comes with years,
Suggests that man's impatience is the cause of most he fears,
Suggests that war's upheaval is but the anvil clink,
The welding by the Forger of yet another link
In that great chain of progress that binds successive time,
From chaos on to order, and then to heights sublime!

GOING WEST.

A pulsing silence shrouds me round
Like waves one feels, but hears no sound,
Then slowly, as from realms above,
There come soft whispered words of love.

And something presses on my heart,
Of my own self it seems a part,
So very close I feel—her head—
And now I know she is not dead!

I try to break the secret charm
That weighs upon my nerveless arm,
I want to hold my love so close
She will not wander whilst I doze.

I think I fell asleep,
The silence seemed more deep,
I could not catch the beat
The noiseless waves repeat.

Again there comes that soundless sound,
The heavy, ceaseless, rhythmic pound.
Is it the throb of worlds alive?
Is it the hum of some near hive?

My own tired pulse may be the cause
Of what is more like faint applause,
Of what might be a funeral drum
So muffled to be almost dumb.

But no, that pressure on my heart
Reminds me, with a sudden dart
Of pain, so keen it seems to thrill,
That my dear love is by me still.

And now I understand
The meaning of that band,
Her heart is beating time
In unison with mine.

Again those words of love I hear,
But now they are so very near,
They're telling me of deeds I've done
And of the wished for cross I've won!

So after all my life's not lost,
Amidst that fiery holocaust,
I've done what I was meant to do,
What matter if the fight's not through!

My little love your head is pressed
Too close upon my burning breast,
And yet it seems, that while you press,
The pain is growing less and less.

Perhaps I'm going west,
I'm tired, I want to rest,
My breathing's slow and deep,
I'm sinking fast asleep—

In shell tossed No Man's Land they saw him, lying
Unconscious, smiling in his sleep, but dying—
His broken arm hung limp, a mortal wound
Gaped wide above his heart, on which they found,
Tight pressed, the picture of his youthful bride,
Whose grave is swept by ocean's restless tide.

PERFECT IN THY PROMISE.

Perfect in thy promise, as the bud unfolding,
Perfect in thyself, as rose fresh blown,
Ever gracious, all that's pure and good upholding,
Perfect spirit, hast thou really flown?

Must I spend alone the many, many morrows,
Void of blissful hopes together spanned,
Hopes of service in assuaging others' sorrows,
Hopes of varied joys together planned?

No, these heavy mourning weeds I'll cast asunder,
Struggle through the clouds that wrap me round,
Close my ears to their unholy, fearsome thunder,
Spring anew to life from grief unbound.

Perfect spirit, now I know that thou art near me;
In thy tender love I rest content,
Trusting in that love to cheer, and help, and steer me,
Till I too have climbed life's steep ascent!

ARMAGEDDON.

The Armageddon of the ages,
In pent up wrath and fury rages,
And little souls like children cry,
And little souls are asking why.

The Armageddon of the ages,
The Lord of all, in pity stages,
That little souls may grow in grace,
That little souls may know His face.

The Armageddon of the ages,
Foretold by holy men and sages,
The last and greatest fight of all—
When good shall win, and evil fall,
When nation shall clasp hands with nation
In universal federation!

THE FAIRIES.

Merrily the fairies march,
In and out,
Round about,
Where toadstools in magic row
Mark their course by moonlight glow.
In and out,
Round about,
Waving music with their wands,
Cheerful little vagabonds,
Knowing nought of care or duty,
Living but for play and beauty,
Dancing in the moonshine hours,
They will hide from sun and showers.

No one seeks the fairies now,
They're forgotten with our joys,
They're forgotten with our toys,
No one seeks the fairies now.

THE SOLDIERS.

Sternly march the soldier men,
Straight ahead,
Where they're led,
Ready for self-sacrifice,
Braving death in any guise.
Straight ahead,
Where they're led,
Sternly march the splendid hosts,
Never flinching from their posts,
Facing frightful odds at first,
When o'er peaceful lands war burst,
Beating back the hated foe
With a strong united blow.

Thinking of our soldier men
There's no duty we will shirk,
Rain or shine will stop no work,
Thinking of our soldier men.

NO TEARS.

For a hero's death, no tears!
He fought for lasting peace,
But everlasting peace he's won;
It might be troubled if I wept.

"MON REPOS."

"Mon Repos" he called our home,
Meaning his and mine.
He has gone, our home has gone;
But "Mon Repos" still shelters me.

"AS WE FORGIVE." ^[B]

On Belgic dunes the sun is gayly shining
And little children can forget—and play;
A jolly band with smiles and arms entwining
Are running through the sands and lose their way.

They stop their frolicking and rather weary
They chance upon a road where, looking round,
They see the perfect Son of gentle Mary
Resigned upon His cross though pierced and bound.

At His dear feet, in prayer, they closely snuggle
And chant the words of Him they all adore,
But "trespasses" reminding them, they struggle
To finish, hesitate, can say no more.

A step is heard, a presence felt that captures
The stammered words, and firmly all repeat
The Pater Noster to its end. What raptures!
Their hero King! they see and humbly greet.

[B] Suggested by a pretty story of King Albert that has filtered through from martyred Belgium.

THE CREW.

O'er the moving waters of the Horicon^[C]
Comes a gentle breeze,
Throwing kisses to its ripples,
Flirting with the trees,
Blowing whiffs of scented clover,
Whiffs of sweetest peas.

On the moving waters of the Horicon
Comes a red canoe,
Bearing Cupid, with an arrow
Pointed at the crew,
Sharing youthful dreams together,
In that red canoe!

[C] "The Horicon," meaning tail lake, is the Indian name given by Cooper to Lake George.

IN A TRAIN.

A lonesome landscape, brown and grey,
And chilled with flakes of smutchy snow,
So grimly dull that every ray
Of setting sun forgets its glow;

But in the train I sit with one.
Who clears my thoughts of wintry gloom;
She laughs!—and now a midday sun
Is coaxing summer flowers to bloom!

THE BALLAD OF A BUGABOO.^[D]

In Aachen Town, in olden days,
There dwelt a demon beast,
Whose special prey was roysterers
Returning from a feast.

By day, he lurked in caverns deep
Where sulphur waters boil,
And dreamt of evil men and deeds,
Whilst resting from his toil.

By night he issued from the spring,
And those, who saw him, said:
"His body long and shaggy seemed
With oddly flattened head.

His eyes burned like two fiery moons
That paled the Queen of Night,
And when he opened wide his mouth
His teeth gleamed sharp and white.

His tail, which brushed the ground, was decked
With phosphorescent scales,
And yet his paws were like a bear's
With long, protruding nails."

His head and legs were wreathed in chains,
Which rattled as he went
Along the narrow, winding streets
On pranks and mischief bent.

He gambolled like a monstrous calf
Of breed unknown and strange,
And drunken men were filled with fear
Who happened on his range.

His egress led along the drain,
Whence comes, from far below,
The boiling, seething sulphur stream
Whose waters ever flow.

Before the large Bath House was built,
A wide canal was made
To hold this healing flood, and there,
Beneath the beech trees shade,

The poorer women washed their clothes
Without a thought of fear;
Though echoes rattling through the drain
Announced the beast was near

Announced the beast was near.

They felt no fear, for demons shun
The honest light of day,
But as the night came stealing on
They were afraid to stay,

Although the beast was never known
To take a single life,
Was never even known to touch
A child or maid or wife.

He seldom either sought his prey
Before the midnight hour,
And then the haunts of vice and mirth
Around about he'd scour.

Ah, woe betide! the jovial youth
Or greybeard steeped in shame,
Whose shuffling walk and glassy eye
Proclaim from whence he came.

The demon beast with gliding gait
Would follow on his track,
With sudden spring would seize his prey
And hang upon his back.

The more the victim fought and reeled,
The heavier hung the beast,
The more the victim cursed or prayed,
The closer clung the beast.

The wretched man now sought his home
Beneath this awful load,
With beads of sweat upon his brow
He oft mistook the road.

At last, at last he reached his goal,
Worn out by pain and fear,
And as he passed within his home—
The beast would disappear.

With rattling and with clanking chains
The demon gambolled off,
Avoiding church and crucifix,
To seek the sulphur trough;

But if another maudlin man
There chanced upon his way,
Most gladly would he turn aside
To grapple yet more prey.

Then moans and groans began afresh,
As this new victim found
He too must turn from wrong to right,
By sad repentance bound!

[D] The Baakauf—a legend of Charlemagne's Day.

OUR ART.

To be great is not our fate
So we try to gain applause,
To attract, by being in fact,
What perhaps we really are,
Somewhat hazy, if not quite crazy.

See the pictures which we hang,
Daubs of paint, now bright, now faint,
Houses leaning, quaint designs,
Figures queer and how we sneer
At what the common people like!

Though our verse may seem too terse,
Somewhat odd and not quite nice;
Yet it's fine, each single line,
Free from metre and from rhyme,
It's intense, without much sense!

Music may be passing strange,
Tunes appear, then disappear
In a hurricane of sound,
Now a squeak, a louder shriek,
Rockets bursting, grand finale!

With clasped hands the critic stands
Talking much of atmosphere,
Looking wise through half-closed eyes,
He reveals our very soul.
With disdain for all that's plain
He explains our meaning well;
Listeners smile, they love his style
As they love our modern art,
Whose true tone, we can't disown,
Only mystics understand!

ON READING SOME IMAGIST VERSES.

Sensuous cadences
Poignant with feeling,
Writhing like snakes
Before feeding,
Coiling, uncoiling,
In magical curves.

Words most expressive,
Which sound like their meaning,
Throwing pictures before us,
In beauty revealing
Form, movement and feeling;
Words chosen with care
And yet some may ask,
Leading where?
Leading where?

THE MIND OF THE MYSTIC.

Caverns deep and fathomless,
Heights too steep for thought to climb,
Mazes whose key is ecstasy,
Music too sweet for words to speak,
Visions that fleet through aerial dreams,
Woe so drear no hopes can cheer,
Joy that comes with boundless love
Rippling from its source above!

A MONTREAL LULLABY.

The swishing of passing motors,
The rumbling of city cars,
The click and the clack of horses
That sharply accent the bars,
The boom of important freighters,
The whiz of the swifter train
Which slows, with a hushing whisper
To toot of canal refrain.

And, striking its note of rawness,
The hoot of the motor horn
Is shrieking erratic discord,
To show its true Georgian scorn
Of soothing Victorian rhythm;
As sweetly and softly chimes
The old English clock in hallway.
Its tick and its tick make rhymes.

And I sink into slumber
Counting slowly their number,
Tick tick—tick tick—tick—

L'ESPERANCE.

La nuit, en pleurs, s'évanouit,
D'un air vainqueur le jour s'avance,
Et le rayon de l'espérance
Chasse les craintes de la nuit.

Les oiseaux font leur joyeux bruit,
La douleur repose sa lance,
La nuit, en pleurs, s'évanouit,
D'un air vainqueur le jour s'avance.

L'éclat du soleil éblouit,
Zéphyr riant rompt le silence,
Un chant d'amour au ciel s'élance,
Et dans les yeux le bonheur luit,
La nuit, en pleurs, s'évanouit.

MY LAKE.

I love the stillness of my lake
With silent mountains round,
Their peaks denoting lofty thought
Scarce held by earthly bound.

I love the clearness of my lake
Reflecting Heaven's blue,
Symbolic of the pure of heart,
Absorbing grace anew.

I love the clouds above my lake
Of filmy grey and white,
As transient as the grief of those
Who've learnt to live aright!

A SCIENTIFIC PUZZLE.

The vast and cold expanse of boundless space
Where worlds, revolving in a ceaseless race,
Are born in fire, and slowly grow to prime,
Then cool to death in aeon's endless time:
In space so vast could seeds of life survive
And reach another younger world alive,
If wafted, dustwise, from a world grown old,
Whilst lulled to deathless sleep by freezing cold?

Or,

Sunk in a meteor, hurling through space,
Flung from a broken star on its mad race;
Hurling through space ever heading for earth,
Rider momentous! hold fast to your berth,
Cling to your crevice in meteor's side,
Life of a planet depends on this ride!
Last of one world, to be first of another,
Germ most amazing, of all germs the mother,
Strengthen yourself, for your luminous steed
Generates heat from his furious speed,
Strengthen yourself to withstand the fierce jar,
When the swift meteor, rushing from far,
Dashes in frenzy, indenting the earth,
Shaking you free from your perilous berth.

Then,

Feeding on water and warmed by the sun,
Germ of all living, where life there was none,
Energy gaining, dividing in twain,
Wonders and wonders will come in their train.
Life on this planet is now well begun,
Ever evolving, its course it must run
Till at length man can commune with his mate,
Looking to God to explain his strange fate.

For,

Even if true, there is ever the whence?
The why? the how?
God of all Mystery! God of all Truth!
To Thee, we bow!

THE GOOD OLD DAYS.

In the evening
Mysteries come creeping into our garden,
And the slanting beams of the settling sun
Enhance, by their mellowing glow,
The loveliness of trees and lawns and flowers.
The weeds now have their hour of beauty,
The dying cedar hedge is fashioned of golden tissue,
The falling apple blossoms are fairy butterflies,
And the peace of God
Enfolds the troubled heart of man!

As the evening of life draws on,
Memory, the wonder worker, casts her magic spell
Over the past, with its strivings and failures,
Its sorrows and hardships,
Mingling them with its joys and successes,
Till "the good old days" become as perfect
As our garden,
In the twilight hour!

AT LENNOX.

The silver birch, on the mountain top, laughed for sheer joy of being alive!
She looked down on the valley and saw the peaceful farms and the green meadow, where man's only labour was driving a ball from hole to hole, and beyond she saw the gentle slopes of wooded hills and the pure gold of the setting sun and she was happy, for was not all this created just for her!
So she laughed, and every leaf fluttered for joy!

THE FLOWER OF TRUE HAPPINESS.

The Flower of Happiness grows in the fields of the Poor and in the gardens of the Rich and may be gathered by all who want it and have the will to reach for it. It hangs high up on the Tree of Life though, and many never see it at all. They are so busy digging for gold or weeping over graves, they forget to look up. Even amongst those who do see it many are afraid to pluck it, fearing its beauty and fragrance might injure their souls. Others strive for it; but the rock, on which they stand, is so overlaid with greed and lust that, when the Flower is within their reach, they slip, clutching but a broken stalk.

A few only, with their feet firmly planted on the plane of moderation and their faces turned towards God, gather this wondrous Flower. At moments it may wilt; but the true Flower always revives, and whiffs of its sweetness go to gladden many hearts as they, who have plucked it, walk amongst their fellow-men.

THE MOUNTAIN TOP.

A man of mature years and thoughtful mien was slowly ascending the mountain slopes when he met the good minister, with prayer book under arm, on his way to church.

"My dear sir," said the latter, "your steps have passed the House of God, and this the Sabbath morn!"

The other answered: "The house of man, you mean. I go to the House of God, the mountain top, with its foundation of finite rock and its roof of infinite space; and there, from the finite my soul aspires to the infinite, from sin to perfection, from the known to the ideal, from disorder to harmony, from man to God."

"This too, I preach," said the good minister.

"And so do the Rabbi, the Brahman and the priests of the many religions and sects of this world," replied the other. "But each explains the great mystery in his own way and the many ways confuse me and so, as alone I must one day meet my God, alone now I seek Him on the mountain top."

"Let not our many ways trouble you," said the good minister, with a kindly smile. "If you really have our common goal in your heart, you need not climb to the mountain top to find the House of God; because then you will know it is everywhere, as God is everywhere!"

CHARITY.

A lovable and beautiful maid was Charity, yet withal thoughtless and somewhat vain. She was admired and "God-blessed" by all men, for what beggar did she ever repulse! And for each coin she dropped into a beggar's hand, what treasure was she not storing up for herself in the wonderful kingdom to come!

But some of the beggars began to whisper among themselves that it was not fair that she should receive such great reward for doing so very little, and that the scattered coins vanished almost as soon as they touched their outstretched hands, and that misery was everywhere.

At last these murmurings reached Charity herself and they bewildered her. So she looked more closely at the beggars and she saw here a blind one, there a lame one, and many, many who were sick and weary, and her heart was touched. So she came down from her pedestal and soothed and comforted the needy, even finding cures for a few of them. Now she was admired and loved more than ever, and greater than ever she felt was that future reward she was heaping up for herself.

But some of the beggars again began to whisper that everything was not right, that perhaps after all it was not Charity they wanted, and again Charity heard, and she looked at the beggars yet more closely and she found in every face the promise of something better, if she could but reach it. So she called all the Sciences and all the Arts to her aid and for long they communed together. Then the Sciences and the Arts went to work, accompanied by a sweet and perfect Charity, who now sought her only reward in her power to serve and to love, and they found the roots of the many evils that beset the world and one by one they destroyed them.

No angry whisperings now, no gruesome beggars more; but soft laughter and willing helpers everywhere about.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FLAG, AND OTHER POEMS, 1918 ***

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