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MANY MOODS

By

E. J. PRATT

TORONTO

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
OF CANADA LTD.
AT ST MARTIN'S HOUSE
1932

To
VIOLA
and
CLAIRE

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MANY MOODS

A REVERIE ON A DOG

We know the symptoms well: that sudden stitch,
We call it, in the side, and the cold rheum
That fills the corners of the eyes; the twitch
Of nerves, and those hot spasms that consume
The strength which would endure the duller pains
In creaking joints and knotted sinews. Time
Accounts for it, pouring his chilling rime,
Instead of blood, through arteries and veins
And hardening up the walls. It's just old age,
Plying her tendon needles through and through,
That knits the tangles in the cartilage.
Easy to see why she should come to men
Under the stress of three score years and ten,
But why to dogs and least of all to you.

To-night it's hard for me to understand
You are the same great fellow that I knew,
As freedom to the sea as to the land.
There is the same wide forehead; the same wise
Reflection in your brown and tolerant eyes;
The deep curl lustre of your shaggy coat;
The massive jet circumference of your throat;
Your heave of shoulders, length of back—but these,
Reminders of your prime, may not disguise

That in the effort of that laboured thump
Your tail declared lumbago in the rump;
Nor make me disbelieve how ill at ease
You feel placing your head upon my knees,
For when I spoke your name, your forelegs told
As plain as speech itself that you were old.

Not years—but fifteen weeks—it seems to be:
The span of a canine biography.
We had you as a pup, a ball of fur,
Without a bone in your anatomy.
No leopard's cub was ever livelier.
I do not know the kind of lubrication that
Was rendered to your gristle from your fat.
You tied yourself in skeins and then untied,
Or with your teeth into a stick you hung,
Like a blood-leech to a swimmer, as we swung
You over water from a schooner's side.
A whistle acted like a hidden spring,
Releasing inward levers, wheels and traps;
Your leaps were antics of a crazy thing,
Your barks—a series of percussion caps.

And you were brought up somewhat like a child:
We teased and petted you and leathered you,
And sent you to your kennel, tethered you,
And put you on short rations for your wild
And freakish ways; and often did we turn
You with a broomstick out of doors
To howl the livelong night that you might learn
To have respect for kitchen mats and floors.
You don't forget the evening when you kept

Your vigil waiting till the household slept,
Crept up the stairs, entered the attic, stole
Into a cupboard, and began to chew
The life out of a silver-buckled shoe.
You caught it like a muskrat without warning;
You tore the clasp and uppers from the sole,
And then slept on the carnage till the morning,
When Aunt Marie with her keen tongue and keener
Strap, sauntered in, and with a master-stroke
That caught you flush upon the quarters, woke
Your conscience to its first high misdemeanour.

But when you grew to adult strength and size,
We thought it most absurd to scandalise
Your judgment with such capers as debase
The minds of other dogs about the place.
What greater training nonsense can be known
Than this—to whistle for a dog full-grown,
Especially if old and adipose,
And bid him stand upon his two hind legs,
Silent with forepaws drooping as he begs
A lump of sugar placed upon his nose,
While someone counted up to five or six;
Or dress him up in scarlet coat and pants,
And make him balance on one leg or dance
As if he were a monkey: now, these tricks
Might well pertain to Poms or Pekingese
And other breeds of sofa pedigrees,
But not to you who, scorning a command,
The circus gesture of a whip or hand,
But just for fun, would never hesitate
To make a clear leap at a five-foot gate,

Jump from the bow-sprit to the sea or take
A two-mile morning swim across a lake;
Or—what we thought the greatest sport of all—
To fight your way out to the last high wall
Of breakers, place your fine retrieving grip
On anything we flung—a rope or chip;
And what a sight as you emerged and laid
It at our feet! and how the rainbows played
Above the rising showers as you tried
To drown us with salt water from your hide!

You never fought with smaller dogs: your pride
Regarded wrangling as undignified.
But once when a half-bred conceited pup,
A Dachshund or a poodle broke your nap
One afternoon with his infernal yap;
When for a solid hour he kept it up,
Presuming on your patience—then we saw
You lose your temper. Not being worth a bite,
Much less the honour of a serious fight,
He took a blow from your contemptuous paw
Which drove him deep into a snow-drift where
You held him without benefit of air,
Until, at length released, he scrambled out
With what was left to him of wind and limb,
And disappeared in one vertiginous rout
As if the devil himself were after him.

Now in the course of years it came to pass
This little strip of shoreline grew to fame,
Merely as habitation for your name,
When a great kennel of the ribbon class,

Whose carriage of the head and vertebrae
Announced but one—your own—paternity,
Delivered to the world a score of males—
Those champions that crashed the fairs, and made
Competitors from other nations fade
Into a group of sorry draggle-tails.
So in these less known parts your blood prevails
Over the mix of anonymity,
For no one here may question dogs whose sires
First drew from such a regal pedigree
To fortify their biologic fires.

And other habits that were bred within
Required no hand of mine to discipline:
Indeed our human sense lagged far behind
The deep uncanny wisdom of your kind.
Call it a second sight or just plain scent,
A calculation or presentiment,
You never were, as we have been, storm-blind,
Nor felt our herded judgment when with head
Bent down we followed hard where no one led,
Circling upon our tracks with that arrest
Of will when east was north and north was west,
And when the winds lied in their throats to tell
Us it was night before the evening fell.

The way you hit direction was our wonder:
Like a Saint Bernard you could find your man
And dig him out; or with the roads snowed under,
Go out into the bush and fetch a span
Of horses home. Blindfolded you could tell
The folk from one another by their smell,

Identify the owner by a sniff
At a shoe-lace or a mitt, and when your tail
Began to wag, we knew it without fail,
That racing down the wind our herring skiff
Was making for the cove—before an eye
Could spot it from the fleet, or could descry
The cut of jib or colour of the sail.

How did it happen too that in default
Of words you had a language all your own
With many a modulation, many a tone?
How much of tameless fury for assault
Was held in the potential of your growl
Awakened by a distant timber howl?
Your notes ran the full gamut from a roar
That fell only below the leonine
Down to the soft insistence of a whine
That begged admittance at the kitchen door.
And, in between, varieties of bark
Expressive of annoyance or delight,
With those domestic gutturals that mark
A mutual recognition and a fight.

But this I know, however much I tried
To give the tongue canine its shadings, yet
The vocal meaning would be poor beside
The drama of your silent alphabet.
Here was the cipher in epitome
Of all our human moods from "A" to "Z(ed)".
In your cocked ears and gently tilted head
Attention had its perfect simile.

What disciplined submission as you tried
To feign indifference though your dilated
Nostrils, sniffing the oven air, belied
The patience in your haunches as you waited:
And what oblivion when you lay curled
Upon the flagstone in the summer shade;
What drowsy misconception of a world
Where stores are always full and bad debts paid!
But tongue and ear and eye and nostril fail
To measure the expression of the tail.
For every curve and angle known to Science
Lay in its lines—the one that stiffly barred
A tramp's suspicious entrance to the yard
Looked like a level ramrod of defiance:
Only one cause could make it deadlier straight—
We saw it on occasions when you stood,
Sniffing the wolf within the husky blood,
When the grey fellow came too near the gate.
And then that most abject configuration,
The tail between the legs, which means disgrace
To other dogs I know, but in your case
The final symbol for complete damnation.
That day—now let me recollect—I've long
Forgotten the real nature of the deed,
Some piece of mischief rather than a wrong
Done with intent I'll readily concede.
But like a fool I hurled at you a word
Hard as a granite fragment for it stirred
The self-respect within your own dog soul;
It made you slink away without a sound,
With lowered flanks and head close to the ground,
As though you searched for the last burial hole.

And when I saw the way your tail became
The figure of your mood, I had no doubt
That even Adam when he was cast out
Knew not such deep contrition in his shame.

But I shall not attempt to picture all
The many joyous movements when it curved
In gentle oscillation at a call
To those tremendous lateral sweeps reserved
For high ecstatic moments when the ship
Came into harbour from a five-months' trip:
For joining in our welcome to the crew
Your tail out-did your bark in the halloo,
And as it thudded on your sides, the slam
Had power enough to flatten out a ram.
Hanged be the man who first tried to defame
An instrument of speech so eloquent
As this—by dubbing it with such a name
That from the dawn of monkeys it has meant
A carryover fussing at the end:
For I am sure that when you greet a friend
It is the tail itself that wags the dog,
And not a vulgar spinal epilogue.

Enough of this—I must reform my ways,
And speak of acts which seven years ago
Broke in upon the passage of our days,
Doings of yours which stirred the village so,
When from the wharf we watched you wondering
What caused your frantic movements to and fro
Behind the five young swimmers, shepherding
Their strange and headlong struggle to the beach;—

The way in which you crisscrossed on your track,
Snapping at something that you could not reach,
Dived and came up, swam forward and swam back,
But ever at the youngsters' plunging feet;
Till someone pointed out in full retreat,
A fin shaped like a cutlass, and we knew
That underneath the furrow was a blue
Torpedo shark making its baffled way
Back to the deeper waters of the bay.

Do you remember too your own wild fear
You would not reach the children at their play
Through the high palings of the field, the day
You managed with that mighty spring to clear
The fence, made for the charging Hereford, caught
Him by the muzzle with four fangs, held on
And worried him until his wind was gone,
When with his nostrils clogged with blood, you brought
Him to his knees. And many another deed
There was of this like scale which would have won
A barrow full of stars, had it been done
By men, but being natural to your breed
The acts have slipped your knowledge and concern;
For who upon this troubled earth could earn
Such wages for such service measureless
And yet demand so little in return—
A caribou-bone of marrow for your share
At supper; a soft word, or the caress
Of a child's arms and the great debt was square.
And there were other days of bitterness
Whose salt was like the sea, but where no less
Your royal kinship with our hearts was shown—

The failures where the will was strong to save,
As on that winter night you took that brave
Dive through the ice-crack, but came up alone;
No pulse next day beat slower than your own
At the enigma of the open grave.

So here you are, your head upon my knees;
Your joints are stiff, your blood is running cold;
How strange it is, in all these fantasies,
I had forgotten that you had grown old.
Old... Well! Here is your last great bond with men,
This year will seal it fast, or perhaps another;
Your fifteen years is our three score and ten;
Give me the paw, old chap—and now, the other.

SEA-GULLS

For one carved instant as they flew,
The language had no simile—
Silver, crystal, ivory
Were tarnished. Etched upon the horizon blue,
The frieze must go unchallenged, for the lift
And carriage of the wings would stain the drift
Of stars against a tropic indigo
Or dull the parable of snow.

Now settling one by one
Within green hollows or where curled

Crests caught the spectrum from the sun,
A thousand wings are furled.
No clay-born lilies of the world
Could blow as free
As those wild orchids of the sea.

THE WAY OF CAPE RACE

Lion-hunger, tiger-leap!
The waves are bred no other way;
It was their way when the Norseman came,
It was the same in Cabot's day:
A thousand years will come again,
When a thousand years have passed away—
Galleon, frigate, liner, plane,
The muster of the slain.

They have placed the light, fog-horn and bell
Along the shore: the wardens keep
Their posts—they do not quell
The roar; they shorten not the leap.
The waves still ring the knell
Of ships that pass at night,
Of dreadnaught and of cockle-shell:
They do not heed the light,
The fog-horn and the bell—
Lion-hunger, tiger-leap!

EROSION

It took the sea a thousand years,
A thousand years to trace
The granite features of this cliff,
In crag and scarp and base.

It took the sea an hour one night,
An hour of storm to place
The sculpture of these granite seams
Upon a woman's face.

THE SEA-CATHEDRAL

Vast and immaculate! No pilgrim bands
In ecstasy before the Parian shrines
Knew such a temple built by human hands
With this transcendent rhythm in its lines.
Like an epic on the north Atlantic stream
It moved, and fairer than a Phidian dream.

Rich gifts unknown to kings were duly brought
At dawn and sunset and at cloudless noons,
Gifts from the sea-gods and the sun who wrought

Cascades and rainbows; flung them in festoons
Over the spires, with emerald, amethyst,
Sapphire and pearl out of their fiery mist.

And music followed when a litany,
Begun with the ring of foam bells and the purl
Of linguals as the edges cut the sea,
Crashed upon a rising storm with whirl
Of floes from far-off spaces where Death rides
The darkened belfries of the evening tides.

Within the sunlight, vast, immaculate!
Beyond all reach of earth in majesty,
It passed on Southwards slowly to its fate—
To be drawn down by the inveterate sea,
Without one chastening fire made to start
From altars built around its polar heart.

A PRAIRIE SUNSET

What alchemist could in one hour so drain
The rainbow of its colours, smelt the ore
From the September lodes of heaven, to pour
This Orient magic on a Western plain,
And build the miracle before our eyes
Of castellated heights and colonnades,
Carraran palaces, and cavalcades
Trooping through a city in the skies!

A northern cloud became a temple spire,
A southern reach showed argosies on fire,
And in the centre, with unhurried feet,
Came priests and paladins, soon to descend
To earth with swinging censers to attend
The god of harvests down amidst his wheat.

And scarcely less resplendent was the passing,
When with the night winds rising on the land,
The hosts were led by a Valkyrian hand
To their abodes, accompanied by the massing
Of amber clouds touched with armorial red,
By thrones dissolving, and by spirals hurled
From golden plinths, announcing to the world
That Day, for all its blazonry, was dead.
And when, like a belated funeral rite,
The last pale torch was smothered by the night,
The mind's horizon like the sky was stripped
Of all illusion but a fable told
Of gods that died, of suns and worlds grown cold,
In some extinct Promethean manuscript.

THE DEPRESSION ENDS

If I could take within my hand
The rod of Prospero for an hour,
With space and speed at my command,
And astro-physics in my power,

Having no reason for my scheme
Beyond the logic of a dream
To change a world predestinate
From the eternal loom of fate,
I'd realise my mad chimera
By smashing distaff and the spinner,
And usher in the golden era
With an apocalyptic dinner.
I'd place a table in the skies
No earthly mind could visualise:
No instruments of earth could bound it—
'Twould take the light-years to go round it.
And to this feast I would invite
Only the faithful, the elect—
The shabby ones of earth's despite,
The victims of her rude neglect,
The most unkempt and motley throng
Ever described in tale or song.
All the good lads I've ever known
From the twelve winds of sea and land
Should hear my shattering bugle tone
And feel its summoning command.
No one should come who never knew
A famine day of rationed gruel,
Nor heard his belly like a flue
Roaring with wind instead of fuel:
No self-made men who proudly claim
To be the architects of fame;
No major-generals iron-shod
Who stalk through life as on parade,
Wearing their badges and gold braid,
And throwing out their chests to God;

No profiteers whose double chins
Are battened on the Corn-Exchange,
While continental breadlines range
Before the dust of flour-bins.
These shall not enter, nor shall those
Who soured with the sun complain
Of all their manufactured woes,
Yet never had an honest pain:
Not these—the well-groomed and the sleeked,
But all the gaunt, the cavern-cheeked,
The waifs whose tightened belts declare
The thinness of their daily fare;
The ill-starred from their natal days,
The gaffers and the stowaways,
The road-tramps and the alley-bred
Who leap to scraps that others fling,
With luck less than the Tishbite, fed
On manna from the raven's wing.

This dinner, now years overdue,
Shall centre in a barbecue.
Orion's club—no longer fable—
Shall fall upon the Taurus head.
No less than Centaurs shall be led
In roaring pairs forth from their stable
And harnessed to the Wain to pull
The mighty carcass of the bull
Across the tundras to the table,
Where he shall stretch from head to stern,
Roasted and basted to a turn.
I'd have the Pleiades prepare
Jugged Lepus (to the vulgar *hare*),

Galactic venison just done
From the corona of the sun,
Hoof jellies from Monoceros,
Planked tuna, shad, stewed terrapin,
And red-gut salmon captured in
The deltas of the Southern Cross.
Devilleed shrimps and scalloped clams,
Flamingoes, capons, luscious yams
And cherries from Hesperides;
And every man and every beast,
Known to the stars' directories
For speed of foot and strength of back,
Would be the couriers to this feast—
Mercury, Atlas, Hercules,
Each bearing a capacious pack.

I would conscript the Gemini,
Persuading Castor to compete
With Pollux on a heavy wager,
Buckboard against the sled, that he,
With Capricornus could not beat
His brother mushing Canis Major.
And on the journey there I'd hail
Aquarius with his nets and pail,
And Neptune with his prong to meet us
At some point on the shores of Cetus,
And bid them superintend a cargo
Of fresh sea-food upon the Argo—
Sturgeon and shell-fish that might serve
To fill the side-boards with *hors d'oeuvres*.

And worthy of the banquet spread

Within this royal court of night,
A curving canopy of light
Shall roof it myriad-diamonded.
For high above the table head
Shall sway a candelabrum where,
According to the legend, dwelt a
Lady seated in a chair
With Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta,
Busy braiding up her hair.
Sirius, the dog-star, shall be put
Immediately above the foot,
And central from the cupola
Shall hang the cluster—Auriga,
With that deep sapphire-hearted stella,
The loveliest of the lamps, Capella.

For all old men whose pilgrim feet
Were calloused with life's dust and heat,
Whose throats were arid with its thirst,
I'd smite Jove's taverns till they burst,
And punch the spigots of his vats,
Till flagons, kegs and barrels all
Were drained of their ambrosial
As dry as the Sahara flats.
For toothless, winded ladies who,
Timid and hesitating, fear
They might not stand the barbecue
(Being so near their obsequies),
I'd serve purees fresh from the ear
Of Spica with a mild ragout—
To satisfy the calories—
Of breast of Cygnus stiffened by

The hind left leg of Aries,
As a last wind-up before they die.
And I would have no wardens there,
Searching the platters for a reason
To seize Diana and declare
That venison is out of season.
For all those children hunger-worn
From drought or flood and harvest failing,
Whether from Nile or Danube hailing,
Or Yang-tse or the Volga born,
I'd communise the total yields
Of summer in the Elysian fields,
Gather the berries from the shrubs
To crown souffles and syllabubs.
Dumplings and trifles and *éclairés*
And roly-polies shall be theirs;
Search as you may, you will not find
One dash of oil, one dish of prunes
To spoil the taste of the macarons,
And I would have you bear in mind
No dietetic aunt-in-law,
With hook-nose and prognathic jaw,
Will try her vain reducing fads
Upon these wenches and these lads.

Now that these grand festivities
Might start with holy auspices,
I would select with Christian care,
To offer up the vesper prayer,
A padre of high blood—no white
Self-pinched, self-punished anchorite,
Who credits up against his dying

His boasted hours of mortifying,
Who thinks he hears a funeral bell
In dinner gongs on principle.
He shall be left to mourn this night,
Walled in his dim religious light:
Unto this feast he shall not come
To breathe his gloom. No! rather some
Sagacious and expansive friar,
Who beams good-will, who loves a briar,
Who, when he has his fellows with him
Around a board, can make a grace
Sonorous, full of liquid rhythm,
Boom from his lungs' majestic bass;
Who, when requested by his host
To do the honours of a toast,
Calls on the clan to rise and hold
Their glasses to the light a minute,
Just to observe the mellow gold
And the rare glint of autumn in it.

Now even at this hour he stands,
The benison upon his face,
In his white hair and moulded hands,
No less than in his spoken grace.
"We thank thee for this table spread
In such a hall, on such a night,
With such unusual stores of bread,
O Lord of love! O Lord of light!
We magnify thy name in praise
At what thy messengers have brought,
For not since Galilean days
Has such a miracle been wrought.

The guests whom thou hast bidden come,
The starved, the maimed, the deaf and dumb,
Were misfits in a world of evil,
And ridden hard by man and devil.
The seven years they have passed through
Were leaner than what Israel knew.
Dear Lord, forgive my liberty,
In telling what thou mayst not know,
For it must seem so queer to thee,
What happens on our earth below:
The sheep graze on a thousand hills,
The cattle roam upon the plains,
The cotton waits upon the mills,
The stores are bursting with their grains,
And yet these ragged ones that kneel
To take thy grace before their meal
Are said to be thy chosen ones,
Lord of the planets and the suns!
Therefore let thy favours fall
In rich abundance on them all.
May not one stomach here to-night
Turn traitor on its appetite.
Take under thy peculiar care
The infants and the aged. Bestow
Upon all invalids a rare
Release of their digestive flow,
That they, with health returned, may know
A hunger equal to the fare,
And for these mercies, Lord, we'll praise
Thee to the limit of our days."

He ended. The salubrious feast

Began: with inundating mirth
It drowned all memories of earth:
It quenched the midnight chimes: nor ceased
It till the wand of Prospero,
Turning its magic on the east,
Broke on a master-charm, when lo!
Answering the summons of her name,
Fresh from the surf of Neptune came
Aurora to the Portico.

OUT OF STEP

(1931 A.D.)

When the celestial dance was planned
For star and constellation,
A mighty baton took command
Of perfect orchestration.
We praised the Master of the skies
For sun and moon and planet—
The ellipse was lovely to our eyes,
So gracefully he ran it.
But when the human dancers met,
This year—about two billion—
They fumbled with their minuet,
And CRASH went their pavilion!

THE MAN AND THE MACHINE

By right of fires that smelted ore
Which he had tended years before,
The man whose hands were on the wheel
Could trace his kinship through her steel,
Between his body warped and bent
In every bone and ligament,
And this "eight-cylinder" streamlined,
The finest model yet designed.
He felt his lesioned pulses strum
Against the rhythm of her hum,
And found his nerves and sinews knot
With sharper spasm as she climbed
The steeper grades, so neatly timed
From storage tank to piston shot—
This creature with the panther grace,
This man with slag upon his face.

A PUZZLE PICTURE

Back of the shell the armour plate,
Behind the armour plate the shell,
Back of a wall a flame of hate,
Behind the hate a sentinel.

Within a strident word a smart,
And held within the smart a blow,
And central to the blow a heart
Smouldering up against a foe.

Puzzle—find the antidote,
When the heart can thus distil
Out of the rancour of the throat
Such poison from a syllable.

THE PARABLE OF PUFFSKY

Puffsky knew not how to live,
But only how to sell,
And strange it is—this truth to tell—
That he was never known to give
And never known to buy.
Crack salesman of his time,
He kept financiers wondering why
He found such means to multiply
His wealth yet never parted with a dime.
He sold by night, he sold by day,
Sold long, sold short, sold anyway;
He'd sell his teeth, he'd sell his eyes: it made
No difference to his trade
No matter what he sold—
Bottles, gases, oils or foods—
The other fellow took the goods,

But Puffsky took the gold.

And yet alas!

One night it came to pass
That just the hour that Puffsky died,
He still assumed the bargaurrole,
For, shambling up to God, he tried
To dicker with his soul.

And the good Lord sized him up and down,
And looked him through and through,
As he would a parvenu;
And then replied with darkening frown,
As Puffsky wedged his foot against the door,
"Sirrah—you may think it strange,
But on the floor
Of this Exchange
We neither barter, buy nor sell,
And neither dime nor rusty sou
Have we to offer you":
And whereupon the Lord adjusted well
A glittering monocle,
And said: "Hence—try thy game in hell".
So without further argument,
Thither Puffsky went.

Then Satan with a hoarse and bronchial laugh—
Amazed that such a spirit could exist—
Appointed a commission,
Composed of two professors on his staff,
A chemist and a pessimist,
To make report upon the apparition;

To estimate
Its size and weight,
Specific gravity,
And value in Gehenna currency.

And from the laboratory retort
Came back this joint report—
"Both size and weight
Are indeterminate.
It is a watered soul
That hath a swollen diaphragm,
Gaseous, but non-inflammable
When mixed with coal,
Therefore in hell
Not worth a current damn".

FROM STONE TO STEEL

From stone to bronze, from bronze to steel
Along the road-dust of the sun,
Two revolutions of the wheel
From Java to Geneva run.

The snarl Neanderthal is worn
Close to the smiling Aryan lips,
The civil polish of the horn
Gleams from our praying finger tips.

The evolution of desire
Has but matured a toxic wine,
Drunk long before its heady fire
Reddened Euphrates or the Rhine.

Between the temple and the cave
The boundary lies tissue-thin:
The yearlings still the altars crave
As satisfaction for a sin.

The road goes up, the road goes down—
Let Java or Geneva be—
But whether to the cross or crown,
The path lies through Gethsemane.

OLD AGE

So poor again—with all that plunder taken;
Your mountain stride, your eagle vision—gone!
And the *All Hail* of your voice in a world forsaken
Of song and curving wings and the laughter of dawn.

So little is left; I cannot be persuaded
It is your hand that shakes; your step that falls;
Your will, once statured on the crags, now faded
To the round of a wheeled chair and four dull walls.

And yet to-day as I watched your pale face yearning,

When the sun's warmth poured through the open door,
And something molten in your soul was burning
Memorial raptures life could not restore;

I knew, by some high trick of sight and hearing,
Your heart was lured beyond the window sills,
Adventuring where the valley mists were clearing,
And silver horns were blowing on the hills.

BLIND

It was your boast before the darkness fell,
That you could measure all your love, and chart
The return of mine so surely as to tell
Both boundary and trespass in my heart.

But when the dawn and the meridian
Entered their sudden fusion with the night;
When roses and anemones began
To grow as winter rushes in your sight;

I wondered by what navigator's sign,
By what vicarious starlight, you could trace
Horizons which were never yours nor mine,
Until your wistful fingers sought my face.

A LEGACY

The will she made contained no room for strife,
For twisted words concerning gold or lands,
For all the wealth that she had saved from life
Was such as lay within her folded hands.

She would have been less rich with other store,
And we the poorer if she had not willed
Only her heart, and then gone out the door,
Leaving that cupboard on the latch and filled.

THE DECISION

(To L.R., a college athlete who died May, 1913.)

You left the field and no one heard
A murmur from you. We,
With burning look and stubborn word,
Challenged the Referee—

Why he forbade you to complete
The run, hailing you back
Before your firm and eager feet
Were halfway round the track;

Unless he had contrived, instead,
To start you on a race,
With an immortal course ahead,
And daybreak on your face.

THE LOST CAUSE

Although with heart as keen and speed as swift
As ancient courier had or argonaut,
You followed every quest that light had caught
Within its web; yet day with niggard thrift
Withdrew its crimsons, causing greys to sift
Like ashes through your hands, till what you thought
Brave banners in the west were phantoms wrought
Merely of space and its amorphous drift.

Still let the heart take counsel of the feet,
Whose loyal sinews bore it up to greet
The night: for though the frugal game denies
The goal—one flaming pennant from the sun—
It won't refuse, after your baffled run,
The long cool wash of stars upon your eyes.

TO AN ENEMY

Some passionate hour before my own deep stripe
Has taken on its healing, I shall trace
Him out, and with clean linen I shall wipe
The stain from that raw cut upon his face;
And with the hand that smote him I shall turn
The audit strong against him, offering
Once more a wound for wound and burn for burn
Out of the heart's own codeless bargaining.

And he, with wound adjuring wound, shall draw
His equal measure to the sacrament
From an old well to which some mortals went
When, with their thirsts ablaze, they looked and saw
An Orient form uplifted in the skies,
And quenched their hate in his forgiving eyes.

WHITHER?

A million years or so, they say,
This world of ours will tire
Of all its burdens, and one day
Perish through frost or fire.

No soul will then remain alive,
And all things good therein—
Faith, love, or valour will survive
As little as its sin.

But I know one whose heart possessed
A love that won't expire,
Should Fate provide no sterner test
Than time or frost or fire.

THE HIGHWAY

What aeons passed without a count or name,
Before the cosmic seneschal,
Succeeding with a plan
Of weaving stellar patterns from a flame,
Announced at his high carnival
An orbit—with Aldebaran!

And when the drifting years had sighted land,
And hills and plains declared their birth
Amid volcanic throes,
What was the lapse before the marshal's hand
Had found a garden on the earth,
And led forth June with her first rose?

And what the gulf between that and the hour,
Late in the simian-human day,
When Nature kept her tryst
With the unfoldment of the star and flower—
When in her sacrificial way
Judaea blossomed with her Christ!

But what made our feet miss the road that brought
The world to such a golden trove,
In our so brief a span?
How may we grasp again the hand that wrought
Such light, such fragrance, and such love,
O star! O rose! O Son of Man?

PUTTING WINTER TO BED

Old Winter with an angry frown
Restationed on his head his crown,
And grew more obdurate,
As rumours every day had flown
From some officials near the throne
That he might abdicate.

Fixing his rivals with his eyes,
He thumped his chest and slapped his thighs,
And ground his Arctic heel,
Splintering the dais, just to show
That he was lord of ice and snow,
With sinews of wrought steel.

His patience had been sorely tried
By a recent blow dealt to his pride,
When March, the stripling, dared
To jeer at him with callow yells,
And shake the hoary icicles

From off the royal beard.

Then at a most indecent time,
The lusty youngster nearing prime,
Gaining in reach and height,
Had called out Winter to his face
To meet him in a neutral place,
And join in single fight.

The gage accepted, Winter drew
First blood, then beat him black and blue
With Nordic thrust and swing,
Till March at last, the wily fox,
Clipped him on the equinox,
And bashed him round the ring;

And would have clearly had him down,
Captured his domain and crown,
When three parts through the bout,
Had not the king with a trick malign,
Cracked him on the nether sign,
And March was counted out.

So now, with an Alaskan ire,
He donned in full his white attire,
Lord of the Polar waste,
And claimed before those flabby-thewed
Contenders of a Southern brood,
He would not be displaced.

And yet before the week was passed,
Neuralgic headaches thick and fast

Were blinding him with tears;
Despite the boast, he needed rest
To stop that panting in his breast,
That buzzing in his ears.

He wandered to a frozen brook
Beneath dank willows where he took
His usual noon-day nap;
He heard dull subterranean calls,
Narcotic sounds from crystal falls,
The climbing of the sap.

He laid his head against a stump,
One arm reclined upon a clump
Of glaciated boulders;
The other held his side—he had
Pleuritic pains and very bad
Rheumatic hips and shoulders.

A sorry sight indeed he lay,
A god-like being in decay—
Dead leaves were all around him:
His favourite cave of ice was streaming,
And many a fallen trunk was steaming,
The day that April found him.

With one glance at his swollen feet,
Her diagnosis was complete,
That dropsy had set in:
She felt his pulse—"Lord, what a rate!
His heart is in a parlous state,
And colic roars within.

"O shame, that March should thus surprise him,
Without a thought to acclimatise him
Towards a mellow age;
I know another way benign
To lead him through an anodyne
Into his hermitage".

She spent the morning in the search
For twigs of alder and of birch
And shoots of pussy willow;
She wove these through a maze of fern,
Added some moss on her return,
And made the downiest pillow.

Then with a bath of rain and sleet,
She took the chilblains from his feet
With tender lubrication:
She poulticed out the angry spots,
The kinks and cramps and spinal knots,
And all discoloration.

So with her first aid rendered, she
Began her ancient sorcery,
Quietly to restore
His overburdened mind to sleep,
Dreamless and passionless and deep,
Out of her wild-wood lore.

It took three days to get his throat
Clear of that wheezy guttural note,
His brain to vaporise;
She conjured him at last to rest,

Folded his hands across his breast
And sealed up both his eyes.

Then over his lank form she threw
The lightest coverlet she knew,
Brought from her deepest glades—
The whites and greys of quiet mood,
Pale pinks and yellows all subdued
With brown and purple shades;

The choicest of her tapestries,
Spring beauties and anemones
Plucked from the winter grass,
Wake-robins too: with these she took
Trout-lilies from a woodland brook
And cool hepaticas.

With one thing more, her task was done—
Something she found hid from the sun
Within a valley low;
"Just what he needs, dawn fresh and white—
The north wind brought it over-night—
A counterpane of snow.

"So now this makes his bed complete".
She doubled it across his feet,
And tucked it neatly in;
Then taking on a mood austere,
Kneeling, she whispered in his ear,
A word of discipline.

"Take heed! Before you enter sleep,

Swear by your honour you will keep
A vow which I propose:
Listen—an oath, which if you break,
'Twill carry for you in its wake
A multitude of woes.

"For eight months now, without demur,
You give your promise not to stir,
And not to roar or wail,
Or send your north wind with its snow,
Or yet the east whose vapours blow
Their shuddering sleet and hail.

"So help you then for evermore—
If you so much as cough or snore,
My seven younger sisters,
Who follow after me in turn,
Are under strict command to burn
Your body up with blisters.

"Of autumn, too, you must beware,
For if you rise to scent the air,
Our Indian-summer maid
Will plague you past what you endure,
Until you think your temperature
One hundred Centigrade.

"But if you keep this honest vow,
I pledge their virtue, here and now,
To rouse you in December;
Then you may come on Christmas Day
With furs and bells, reindeer and sleigh—

But, hand on heart—remember!"

And now, to make the pledge come true,
She walked around the king and drew
Three circles on his breast;
Murmured a charm, then bending down,
She graciously removed the crown,
And left him to his rest.

CHERRIES

"I'll never speak to Jamie again"—
Cried Jennie, "let alone wed,
No not till blackbirds' wings grow white,
And crab-apple trees grow cherries for spite,
But I'll marry Percy instead."

But Jamie met her that self-same day,
Where crab-apple trees outspread,
And poured out his heart like a man insane,
And argued until he became profane,
That he never meant what he said.

Now strange as it seems, the truth must be told,
So wildly Jamie pled,
That cherries came out where the crab-apples grew,
And snow-winged blackbirds came down from the blue,
And feasted overhead.

A FELINE SILHOUETTE

They faced each other, taut and still;
Arched hickory, neck and spine;
Heads down, tails straight, with hair of quill,
The fence—the battleline.

The slits within their eyes describe
The nature of their feud;
Each came to represent a tribe
Which never was subdued.

One minute just before they fought,
Before their blood called—"Time",
One told the other what he thought
In words I cannot rhyme.

They hit each other in mid-air
In one terrific bound,
And even yet, as I'm aware,
They have not struck the ground.

THE CHILD AND THE WREN

(To Claire)

It took three weeks to make them friends—
The wren in fear the maid molest
Those six white eggs within the nest
She built up at the gable-ends.

What fearful language might be heard
(If only English she could speak)
On every day of the first week,
All from the throat of that small bird!

The scolding died away, and then
The fear was followed by surprise
At such sky-blue within the eyes,
That travelled from the girl to wren.

But that third week! I do not know—
It's neither yours to tell nor mine—
Some understanding glance or sign
Had passed between them to and fro;

For never was her face so flushed,
Never so brilliant blue her eye
At any gift that I could buy,
As at the news when in she rushed

To tell us that the wren had come,
With flutter and hop and gurgling sound,
From gable to tree, to shrub, to ground,
Right to her hand to get a crumb.

FROST

The frost moved up the window-pane
Against the sun's advance,
In line and pattern weaving there
Rich scenes of old romance—
Armies on the Russian snows,
Cockade, sword, and lance.

It spun a web more magical,
Each moment creeping higher,
For marble cities crowned the hills
With turret, fane and spire,
Till when it struck the flaming sash,
The Kremlin was on fire.

A NOVEMBER LANDSCAPE

November came today and seized the whole
Of the autumnal store of reds, and left
But drabs and yellows on a land bereft
Of bird and leaf, of body and of soul.

Outside my window now rain-winds patrol
The earth; last August elms and birches seem

Like half-remembered legends in a dream;
Melodious myths—the thrush and oriole.

Such strange delusions when November weaves
The sense of desolation and regret
Through clay and stubble, through dead ferns and leaves
As here lie sodden on the ground: and yet

This was the story told six months ago,
When April lured the crocus through the snow.

MAGIC

To order sun and stars to change their course,
To gather flowers from the Arctic snows,
Command a stream flow upward to its source,
Or make a desert blossom as a rose:

These things Aladdin taught us; and we saw
How to distil a rapture from a moan,
And override the sternest natural law
By straight appeal to a more sovereign throne.

More than a dream to-night—that miracle.
Winter has bridged the autumn back to spring;
For suddenly you entered and your spell
Had power to start a desert blossoming:

But tarry long—the instant you depart,
Sand will resume its drift about my heart.

COMRADES

You—that could not stand the dust
Of a day's dry weather,
Nor in high winds
Shoulder a load together,
Without a faith that was broken,
And a love consumed
By the hot marl of words
That were spoken—

Do you not know that a hemlock root
Will enfold you together,
Though fair be the sky
Or foul be the weather?
To that same bed you shall come,
When the ear shall be deaf
And the lips be dumb;
Where under the turf,
Not a note shall be heard,
From the cry of a wren
To the thunder of surf.

ONE HOUR OF LIFE

This little face will never know—
Cut of wind or bite of snow:
The sea will never wind its sheet
Around those pallid hands and feet.

Nor shall its sleeping heart, grown cold
After a pulse of life, unfold
That futile challenge on the face
Of one who with a last embrace

Could only cheat the earth to save
The plunder for another grave:
But in that hour of battle she
Forgot the patience of the sea.

HORIZONS

You would not come when you were near,
And when the lamp was lit,
And though you always knew I'd hear
Your call and answer it.

Now you would speed across the sea,
To find the door ajar...

The lamp is out, and as for me,
I could not call so far.

DOORS

Daylight now is unavailing,
You will come no more,
Call of voice or bell unheeding
Through life's open door.

Only night may work the magic
With its wand of sleep,
Only when the hour is darkest
And the dream is deep.

Welcome then the unawakening,
Should you come no more
But when voice or bell is calling
Through another door.

THE ARMISTICE SILENCE

Since Death breathed on those youthful hearts that burned
Once in the fierce exchange of wounds, and healed

All feuds with his own limitless forgiving;
Should Life now wait on Death before it learned
A sacrificial secret that concealed
A reconciliation from the living?

How comes it then, that in a kindred way,
The hosts of alien dead should take salute
From flags half-lowered, like ours, upon the staffs?
And—like our own—upon Remembrance Day,
The mothers of our foes should stand so mute
Before the letters on their cenotaphs?

DREAMS

Your body slouched before a dying hearth,
Your pulse just ticking in its faded case,
A greyness as of chill December earth
Recording ninety winters on your face;
When suddenly as if discovering wings,
Your spirit soared into a world of dream,
And high romance shot through your voyaging,
Like laughter rippling from a mountain stream.
What if one hour could eighty seasons shed,
And bring those youthful murmurs to your lips—
Just one slight drowsy tilting of your head
Restore you to your seas and skies and ships;
How should with deeper dream the ocean burn
In amethyst upon its western foam,

And lures unknown to earth arise to turn
Those blanched hands on the tiller towards your home!

TIME-WORN

What magic long ago was in your footstep,
That changed each night to day,
And swung high noon to midnight every hour
You went away.

How long the time—is now beyond my telling,
With days become as years,
And that last pledge of your returning—seasons
In arrears!

I only know my heart is beating slowly:
Come—and swift your feet!
Or else there will be neither noon nor midnight
When we meet.

TO ANGELINA, AN OLD NURSE

She lingers in our memory even yet,
Like an aroma or an anecdote,

Chipped from the 'nineties with her silhouette
Begemmed with buttons from the shoes to throat;
Her paper curls, her parlour pompadour,
Her leg-o'-mutton sleeves, the shawl she wore;
So trussed with cord and whalebone that she faced
The near annihilation of her waist.

Stark as a rampike under winter skies,
She brooded on us with her deep-set eyes
That never slept: mournful and thin was she,
Like something borrowed from eternity.
She never tucked us in our beds at night,
But feared we should not see the next day's light;
And when in course of time the morning broke,
She could not understand it that we woke.
She watched for every sneeze, for every whoop,
And even breadcrumbs in our throats was croup.
A lengthy spell of laughter was a fit,
And she could always put a stop to it.
Though healthy and as active as young beavers,
She always saw in us a soil for fevers.
When we were sound asleep within our cots,
She'd listen to our breathing, bending down
With many a murmur, many an anxious frown,
And turn us over on the search for spots,
Spots on the back and chest and diaphragm,
Spots on the tongue and throat *ad nauseam*—
It might have been a sunburn or the glow
Left over from a joy-ride in the snow,
But measles, chicken-pox or scarlatina
Was always present there to Angelina.

And when, our stomachs full, we went to bed,
Heavy with purloined cake instead of bread,
And gave a bilious scream within our sleep,
Or called her name—Lord, how her blood would creep!
This was delirium—her greatest fear,
The last of all the mortal ills that shocked her,
She knew that the eternal imps were near,
And sent at once for clergyman and doctor.

That town of ours had no apothecary,
And faith, for us he was not necessary.
For Angelina had the cupboards stacked
With every known and unknown medicine—
Hundreds of bottles, till the household smacked
Of things malodorous, day out, day in;
Powders and pills for every malady,
Goose oil and turkey rhubarb, turpentine,
And still more oil, pine syrup, senna tea,
Sulphur and blackstrap, tonics for the spring,
Liquids unnamed—acid and alkaline,
And all most pungent and disquieting.
She used not only standard remedies
By which all mothers classify the seasons:
She improvised for all emergencies
And filled us up for most fictitious reasons
Before the meals or after, on retiring,
Or anytime when chilled or just perspiring;
The moment that we felt unduly merry,
It was our failing appetite, she said—
She touched our temples, charted out the head,
And reached at once for essence of wild cherry.

But then, her first and last line of defence,
The utmost limit of her confidence,
Was what she kept upon the highest board.
'Twas there her rancid Dead Sea salts were stored.
This saturated brine she daily poured
With senna down our throats in fixed routine.
What mattered it to her that we should go
At anytime into the world unseen,
With spirits unprepared or hearts unclean;
It satisfied her conscience quite to know
That if we died, we died at least saline.

And yet, we know, that failing Angelina,
Our infancy and childhood would have been a
Most dull and unheroic sort of thing.
She gave to life its deepest flavouring,
She taught us tastes, improved our deglutition.
We loved her with a pale sardonic love—
The way she kept our thoughts on things above,
Etherealised our bodies by attrition,
The way she proved, despite our apprehensions,
That all she did was with the best intentions.

It's twenty-seven years ago today,
That sainted Angelina passed away,
Answering the summons of an evening bell.
Her soul or wraith or whatso'er it be,
That's left from her corporeality,
Spun out upon its voyage. Whither? Well,
It matters not: but this one thing we know,
That most unhappy would the old nurse be,
If somehow she were not allowed to go

Throughout the nurseries of the nebulae,
Stalking at will, administrative, grim,
With spoon or cup in hand full to the brim
With oil designed for the felicity
Of young and fever-spotted cherubim.

JOCK O' THE LINKS

Ah Jock! I'm sure that as a right
Good honest friend I ken ye,
And damned be he that would indite
A scornful word agen' ye:
A self-controlled God-fearin' Scot,
You fight with all that's evil,
But every time you top your shot
The odds are with the devil.

A softer heart in human breast
I do not know another,
And many a time, in many a test,
You've proved yourself a brother.
That man, I'll swear, is not alive
More temperate in speech,
But every time you fan your drive
I get beyond your reach.

That God is partial to the plaid,
Long-suffering, too, I've heard;

I hope he was the day I had
You stymied on the third;
I cannot vouch for rumour, but
One thing I trust is clear,
That when He saw you miss your putt,
He turned His one deaf ear.

I'm thankful, too, that when you dub
Your spoon, it's not on me
You break your new steel-shafted club
But on your Highland knee.
And wise I have been to abstain
From comments on your stance,
With pibrochs crashing through your brain,
Culloden through your glance.

TATTERHEAD

The old man's vacant stare was out to sea,
His back against the bollards on the quay.
His face was of that wind-taut grain
As if his skin had never brooked
A calm; as if his eyes had looked
On nothing but the whip of salt and rain.
Day after day
He spent that way,
Making no sound
But the scratch of a jack-knife on the bung

Of a Demerara sugar-keg,
And an intermittent thump
Against a loosened timber as his leg,
Made up of cork and hickory, swung
Upon the swivel of his rump.

"They call that fellow—Tatterhead,
A harmless, witless fellow", said
Leopold to Theodore,
As arm in arm they strolled along the shore.

"A beastly, uneventful life indeed",
Quoth Leopold, whose tender mouth
Was sucking at a chocolate meraschino.

"They say he cannot write or read",
This from the lips of Theodore,
Whose head was sleekly combed below
A tilted Borsalino.

"Come, let us go; these dreary rains!"
So home they went—and with their deadly canes,
They murdered dandelions by the score.

But eighteen years before, one wild March night,
When those young bloods,
In the rose glow of candelabra light,
And smooth with olive oil and Castile suds,
Were drooling on their bibs,
This weazened tar, through bonds of ice and hemp,
Incorporate with a wheel,
Had watched two shuddering jibs
Dip to a plunging keel,
In a northern strait—somewhere
Within the track of Frobisher.

THE CONVICT HOLOCAUST

(Columbus, Ohio, 1930)

Waiting their turn to be identified,
After their fiery contact with the walls,
Three hundred pariahs ranged side by side
Upon the floors along the cattle stalls!

The fires consumed their numbers with their breath,
Charred out their names: though many of the dead
Gave proof of valour, just before their death,
That Caesar's legions might have coveted.

But these, still subject to the law's commands,
Received the last insignia of the cell:
The guards went through them, straightened out their
hands,
And with the ink-brush got the thumb-prints well.

THE DRAG-IRONS

He who had learned for thirty years to ride
The seas and storms in punt and skiff and brig,

Would hardly scorn to take before he died
His final lap in Neptune's whirligig.

But with his Captain's blood he did resent,
With livid silence and with glassy look,
This fishy treatment when his years were spent—
To come up dead upon a grapnel hook.

A LEE-SHORE

Her heart cried out—"Come home, come home",
When the storm beat in at the door,
When the window showed a spatter of foam,
And her ear rang with the roar
Of the reef; and she called again, "Come home",
To the ship in reach of the shore.

"But not to-night", flashed the signal light
From the Cape that guarded the bay,
"No, not to-night", rang the foam where the white
Hard edge of the breakers lay;
"Keep away from the crash of the storm, at its height,
Keep away from the land, keep away".

"Come home", her heart cried out again,
"For the edge of the reef is white."
But she pressed her face to the window-pane,
And read the flash of the signal light;

Then her voice called out when her heart was slain,
"Keep away, my love, to-night".

THE PURSUIT

One glance at my pursuer, and I fled.
Monsters had chased me many times before,
But nothing with this tongue and with this roar;
For every time I turned my head,
It changed its shape,
A dragon now, and now a dinosaur,
Now hound, now hippogriff,
With flowing mane and mouth agape.
It followed me from cliff to cliff,
Through sea-weed on the shore,
And out into the tide—
This hungry, fetid carnivore,
Greenish-scaled and fire-eyed,
This hound, this centipede,
This terror of Satanic breed.
It gained on me at every stride,
Then struck—I do not know
The part of me that took the blow;
I thought it was my collar-bone;
I woke, and heard a voice... "You sinner!
Next time you eat roast duck for dinner,
You sleep alone".

THE FUGITIVE

We reached the lake when day's last hours were strung
To themes that made more deep the forest hush—
Whisper of leaf; the vesper of a thrush;
The whirr of plover wings. A rainbow hung
Above a waterfall. To north, age-old
Hemlocks were tipped by blue of Tyrian dye.
Through spruces jet against the western sky
The level sun was pouring tides of gold.

Along the shore a cry rose to assail
His ear, distant, but loud enough to start
Wild echoes from the hammers at his heart—
A deep recurrent baying at a trail.
Of all invading discords, this—to break
A sunset-thrush concerto on a lake.

THE 6000

For creatures of this modern breed,
Reared from the element of flame,
Designed to match a storm for speed,
Ionia would have found a name,

Like Mercury or Bucephalus—
Some picturesque immortal label
That lifts a story into fable,
Out of the myths of Uranus;
Then changed its root to demonise
The nature of its strength and size
With fictions out of Tartarus.

Those giants of Vulcan, leather-skinned,
Whose frightful stare monocular
Made mad the coursers of the wind,
And chased the light of the morning star
Away from the Sicilian shore,
Would have been terror-blind before
This forehead which, had it been known
In Greek or Scandinavian lore,
Had turned the hierarchs to stone,
Had battered down the Martian walls,
Reduced to dust Jove's arsenals,
Or rammed the battlements of Thor.

His body black as Erebus
Accorded with the hue of night;
His central eye self-luminous
Threw out a cone of noon-day light,
Which split the gloom and then flashed back
The diamond levels of the track.
No ancient poet ever saw
Just such a monster as could draw
The Olympian tonnage of a load
Like this along an iron road;
Or ever thought that such a birth—

The issue of an inventor's dream—
With breath of fire and blood of steam,
Could find delivery on this earth.
In his vast belly was a pit,
Which even Homer would admit,
Or Dante, searching earth and hell,
Possessed no perfect parallel.
Evolved from no Plutonian forge,
The tender, like a slave, that followed,
Conveyed bitumen to his gorge,
Which on the instant it was swallowed
Ran black through crimson on to white.
Above the mass floated a swirl
Of crystal shapes, agate and pearl
And rose, like imps a-chase, and light
As thistledown, while the blast roared
With angry temperatures that soared
To seven hundred Fahrenheit.

Outside, the engine's dorsal plate,
Above the furnace door ajar,
Revealed the boiler's throbbing rate,
By dial fingers animate,
Like pulses at the jugular.

For every vital inch of steel,
A vibrant indicator read
Two hundred pounds plus twenty-five,
Waiting for the hour to drive
Their energy upon the wheel
In punches from the piston head.

And there another one supplied
The measure of the irrigation,
Whereby the lubricating tide,
Through linear runs and axle curves,
Made perfect his articulation.
And ramifying copper wire
Made up the system of his nerves,
In keeping with his lungs of fire.

Now with his armoured carapace
On head and belly, back and breast,
The Taurian prepared to face
The blurring stretches of the west.
To him it was of no concern
The evening gale was soon to turn
To the full stature of a storm
That would within an hour transform
The ranges for a thousand miles,
Close up all human thoroughfares,
Sweep down through canyons and defiles,
And drive the cougars to their lairs.

A lantern flashed out a command,
A bell was ringing as a hand
Clutched at a throttle, and the bull,
At once obedient to the pull,
Began with bellowing throat to lead
By slow accelerating speed
Six thousand tons of caravan
Out to the spaces—there to toss
The blizzard from his path across
The prairies of Saskatchewan.

THE RITUAL

I

She took her name beneath according skies
With ringing harbour cheers, and in the lee
Of hills derived her birthright to the sea—
The adoration of a thousand eyes.
Each bulwark ran its way from stern to prow,
With the slim tracery of a sea-gull's wing,
And—happy augury for the christening—
The bottle broke in rainbows on her bow.

Beyond the port in roll and leap and curl,
In the rich hues of sunlight on the spray,
And in the march of tides—swept down the bay
The pageant of the morning, to the skirl
Of merry pipers as the rising gale
Sounded a challenge to her maiden sail.

II

She left her name under revolted skies,
Before the break of day, upon a rock
Whose long and sunken ledge met the full shock
Of an Atlantic storm, and with the cries
Of the curlews issuing from dark caves,
Accompanied by the thud of wings from shags

That veered down from their nests upon the crags
To pounce on bulwarks shattered by the waves.

And the birthright that was granted for a brief,
Exultant hour with cheers and in the lee
Of hills was now restored unto the sea,
Amidst the grounded gutturals of the reef,
And with the grind of timbers on the sides
Of cliffs resounding with the march of tides.

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By E. J. PRATT

Newfoundland Verse
The Witches' Brew
Titans

The Iron Door
The Roosevelt and the Antinoe
Verses of the Sea

[The end of *Many Moods* by E. J. Pratt]