Classic Poetry Series

Alexander MacGregor Rose

- 5 poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Alexander MacGregor Rose (17 August 1846 - 10 May 1898)

Alexander Macgregor Rose was born August 17, 1846, in Tomantoul, Banffshire. He graduated from the University of Aberdeen in 1867 and became, in 1870, Master of the Free Church School in Gairloch, Rossshire. After returning to Aberdeen to study Divinity from 1871, he was ordained on Sept. 9, 1875, and became minister at the Free Church of Evie and Rendall, Orkney. Bankrupt, and in disgrace, Rose left Scotland, his wife, and his family on June 10, 1879, for New York. In America he became a journalist, notably at the San Diego Daily Bee and then on the San Franciso Examiner, the San Francisco Sunday Chronicle, and the Daily Call. By 1891 he had left California and was wandering northwards, at first to Toronto by 1895, and at last to Montreal by 1896, where he worked for the Gazette and the Montreal Herald. He died on May 10, 1898, at Notre Dame Hospital, evidently of a paralytic stroke, and was buried in the lot of the St. Andrews Society in Mount Royal Cemetery.

Although Rose had written poems for some years, he only achieved fame for occasional comic verse written in the last two years of his life and published in Montreal newspapers. "Hoch der Kaiser" became so popular in decades before World War I that his very authorship of the poem was forgotten. In Canada, his two squibs on Liberal and Conservative politics under Sir Wilfrid Laurier won Rose an honour granted, as far as is known, to no other poet. Rose wrote P. J. Anderson on Nov. 27, 1897:

I may tell you that after the publication of the latest ballad in the Witness, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who is a very good fellow all round, wrote me a very pleasant letter, full of the most complementary expressions, and asked me to run up to Ottawa to see him. I did so, had an interview with him in his private room in the Government House, and dined with him and Lady Laurier. Afterwards he told me that when the Witness containing my verses reached Ottawa, Solicitor-General Fitzpatrick brought a copy to the meeting of the Privy Council that morning, and asked for a suspension of the rules while he read the verses aloud. `The first time,' said Sir Wilfrid, `so far as I know, that poetry was ever mixed up with affairs of State in the proceedings of Her Majesty's Canadian Privy Council.' (Poems, 29)

Rose's imitation of the French-Canadian colloquial English, what we might call "franglais," was no doubt inspired by the success of William Henry Drummond "habitant" poems.

Works:

Rose, Alexander MacGregor. Hoch der Kaiser: Myself und Gott (1900)
Poems of A. MacGregor Rose (Gordon)

Sir Wilfrid's progress through England and France in the Jubilee year (1897)

Diplomatist

I live on Canada en Bas —
De fines' lan' you see —
An' Oncle Sam, a fr'en of mine,
He live nex' door to me.

Now, long tam' Sam an' me mak' trade,
W'enever that we meet,
An' Sam, he drive de bargain hard,
Sometime bigarre! he sheat.

I not say mooch about it, me,
I never t'ink no harm
Before I fin' mon Oncle Sam
He wan' my little farm.

An' w'en I not to heem will give
De lan' my fader hown,
Den Sam get mad an' say to me,
'I'll play my hand alone.

You kip away; I not will trade,
Don' come my place about!'
Ah! den I see hees leetle game
Was w'at you call 'freeze-hout.'

Mais, I can stan' de fros', for hice
To me is not'ing new;
Sir John mak' freeze agains' de Yanks —
See if dey lak' it, too.

But w'en Sir John t'row up his han'
An' die, 'twas change indeed;
No par'ner lef' could follow up
De fin' ole chieftain's lead.

An' de Canadian peup' was tire,
For dey was not mooch please
For pay big price for jus' to nurse
Les enfants industries.

Dey say, 'We wan' to buy our t'ing
On some mooch sheaper shop,
Dose enfants industries are sure
Long tam' for growing hup.'

For eighteen year dey pull l'argent
From bottom of de purse,
We t'ink it ees long tam' enough
For dem to be on nurse.

Den Tories try for bargain mak'
To trade wit' Sam again,

But was shok off as soon dey spik'
    By Monsieur Jacques G. Blaine.

He say, 'My fren's, before we will
    Wit you reciprocate,
You mus' agains' ole England mak'
    One sharp discriminate.'

Dat took dem Tory breat' away,
    Dey dropp de bees'ness den,
No more dey go on Washington
    Nor write dere wit' de pen.

By'mbye last year, our Canada
    T'en she know w'at she wants,
An' wit' her toe, de mont' of June,
    She kick de Tory pants.

She sen' for Laurier, an' at once
    Immediatement he comes,
She say, 'Instead of one boule-dogue
    I'll have one gentilhomme.'

Sir Wilfrid, soon he tak' de chair,
    An' dis he plainly state:
'For Anglan' — not agains' her — I
    Will mak' discriminate.

'If Oncle Sam, from out his lan'
    Will keep Canadian men,
We'll do de sam' to Yankee, too —
    An' w'at will he do den?

'We'll play de game all sam' lak' heem,
    An' mak' wan alien law,
An' more, bigarre! we'll hear him squeal
    When he ees `hors de bois.''

Den Oncle Sam, he scratch hees head
    An' say, 'Dat's quit' enuff,
I see Sir Wilfrid Laurier's vat
    You might call `up on snuff!''

So w'en Sir Wilfrid go to talk
    'Bout dem Pacific seal,
Mon Oncle Sam tak' heem one side,
    An' mak' some smoot' appeal.

'I lak' Canadian, yes, for sure,
    I wan' for be your fren'.'
'We lak' you, too,' Sir Wilfrid say,
    But only now an' den;

'For we'en you kick Canadian hout,
    An' tink to mak' a fuss
Agains' de Mother Lan', we say —
    `You cannot bully us.''

'Jes so,' say Sam, 'we mak hall right,
    We tak' de whole dat pack,
Wit' me an' you an' Anglan' too,
    It mus' be give an' tak'.'

'Correc',' Sir Wilfrid rise an' say,
    Den Sam an' he shak' hands,
To live no more lak' chat et chien,
    But lak' les bons voisins.

Den Wilfrid, he come home again,
    An' t'ings go well partout,
De markets rise, de trade increase —
    Prosperitie renew.

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Kaiser and Co. Or Hoch der Kaiser

[Being Wilhelm der Grosser's estimate of himself and partner, translated from the original Hoch-deutsch.]

Der Kaiser auf der Vaterland
Und Gott on high all dings gommand,
Ve two! Ach! don'd you understandt?
Meinself -- und Gott.

He reigns in Heafen, und always shall,
Und mein own Embire don'd vas small;
Ein noble bair, I dink you call
Meinself -- und Gott.

While some men sing der power divine,
Mein soldiers sing der "Wacht am Rhein,"
Und drink der healt in Rhenish wein,
Auf me -- und Gott.

Dere's France dot swaggers all aroundt,
She ausgespieldt -- she's no aggoundt,
To mooch ve dinks she don't amoundt:
Meinself -- und Gott.

She vill not dare to fight again,
But if she should, I'll show her blain
Dot Elsass und (in French) Lorraine
Are Mein -- und Gott's.

Von Bismarck was a man auf might,
Und dought he vas glean oud auf sight,
But ach! he vas nicht goot to fight
Mit me -- und Gott.

Ve knock him like ein man auf sdraw,
Ve let him know whose vill vas law,
Und dot ve don'd vould sdandt his jaw,
Meinself -- und Got.

Ve send him oudt in big disgrace,
Ve gif him insuldt to his face,
Und put Caprivi in his place,
Meinself -- und Gott.

Und ven Caprivi get svelled headt,
Ve very brombtly on him set,
Und toldt him to get vp and get --
Meinself -- und Gott.

Dere's Grandma dinks she's nicht shmall beer,
Mit Boers und dings she interfere;
She'll learn none runs dis hemisphere

But Me -- und Gott.

She dinks, goot frau, some ships she's got,
Und soldiers mit der sgarlet coat,
Ach! ve could knock dem -- pouf! like dot,
Meinself -- und Gott.

Dey say dat badly fooled I vas
At Betersburg by Nicholas,
Und dat I act shust like ein ass
Und dupe, Herr Gott.

Vell, maybe yah und maybe nein,
Und maybe Czar mit France gombine
To take dem lands about der Rhein
From me -- und Gott.

But dey may try dot leedle game,
Und make der breaks; but all der same,
Dey only vill increase der fame
Auf me -- und Gott.

In dimes auf beace, brebared for wars
I bear der helm and sbear auf Mars,
Und care nicht for ten dousand Czars,
Meinself -- und Gott.

In short, I humour efery whim,
Mit aspect dark and visage grim,
Gott pulls mit me und I mit Him --
Meinself -- und Gott.

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L'Envoy

I t'ink for dis Canadian lan'
For mak' it t'rive an' grow,
De bes' ees Wilfrid Laurier's smile,
De wors' de Tupper blow.

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Tour Abroad of Wilfrid the Great

By Jean Baptiste Trudeau.

W'en Queen Victoria calls her peup's
For mak' some Jubilee,
She sen' for men from all de worl' --
And from her colonie.

But mos' of all, she sen' dis word
To dis Canadian shore,
"If Wilfrid Laurier do not come,
I will be glad no more."

Den Wilfrid not hard-hearted, he
Lif' w'at you call de hat,
An' say, "Ma reine, you mus' not fret,
For little t'ing lak' dat.

"To Londres, on de day in June
You mention, I will come,
And show you w'at is lak' de French-
Canadian gentilhomme."

So Wildred sailed across de sea,
An' Queen Victoria met,
An' w'en she's see him, ah! she is
Jus' tickle half to deat'!

An' w'en he's kneel, as etiquette
Demand, for be correc',
She tak' a sword into her han'
An' hit him on de neck.

An' w'en she do, she smile on him,
An' dese de words she say:
"Rise up, my true Canadian Knight --
Sir Wilfrid Laurier!

"An' on dose grand Imperial plans
Which I have now in view,
For guidance, counsel, an' advice
I'll always look to you."

Den Wilfrid kiss de Royal han',
An' back off on de door,
An' bow as only Frenchman can,
An' smile an' bow some more.

Nex' day, it was a glorious sight,
At half-pas' twelve o'clock,
To see Sir Wilfrid ride in state,
An' in chapeau de coque.

Lords Solsby, Roberts, and Cecil Rhodes,
An' Chamberlain an' dose
Were w'at you call "not in it," for
Sir Wilfrid was de boss.

Oui, certainement, excep' de Queen
Herself dat glorious day,
De greates' man on Angleterre
Was Wilfrid Laurier.

VISITS PARIS.

Sir Wilfrid cross de Channel den,
Mak' visit La Patrie,
An' mak' fine speeches two or three
In de city of Paree.

An' shak' de han', an' drink de vin
Mit Faure de Presiden',
An' show him what de kin' of man
Dis contrie represen'.

An' w'en Dir Wilfrid's voice dey hear,
An' his fine shape dey see,
De men of France was hall surprise,
De ladies hall epris.

Den Monsieur Faure he rise an say,
"Sir Wilfrid Laurier,
In de Legion d'Honneur you are
Un grand officier."

An' to Sir Wilfrid, front dem hall,
He mak' some fine address,
An' den ribbon wit' de star
He pin upon his breas'.

En bref, our Wilfrid capture France,
He's capture Anglan', too;
I t'ink he will annex dem both
To Canada -- don' you?

SIR WILFRID'S RETURN.

Sir Wilfrid, tired of Jubilee
An' glorie an' eclat,
He says, "Dese contrie dey ees not
Lak' my own Canada.

"I wan' my own dear lan' for see
An' de St. Laurent gran',
An' hear again de French he spik
Mon bonhomme habitan!"

Den to the Queen an' Monsieur Faure
Hees "au revoirs" he say,
"I mus' go back on ole Kebec,
An' Mo'real dis day.

"An' I mus go an help toujours,
Lor' Aberdeen mak' law,
An' keep dem Tory boodler from
De safe in Ottawa.

"An' help Sir Olivair, Sir Deek
An' Tarte mak' politique,
An' keep Sir Tuppair an' hees gang
From play some crooked trique."

So, on de "Labrador" he sail,
On Canada he come,
We hall be glad his face to see,
An' he ees glad be home.

An' hall de Angleesh, Ireesh, Franch
'Roun hees triomphan' car,
Say, "Bienvenu! Come, spok to us
Upon de Champ de Mars."

Sir Wilfrid tole us dat he drink
Dose vins mit' Monsieur Faure,
An' dine on Windsor -- so he tole
Us on de Champ de Mars.

Den hall de peup' dey mak' big cheer,
De cannon dey mak' shoot,
We hall be on one grand hoorau,
De steamboats on a toot.

So we hall sing, "God bless de Queen!
An' Monsieur Faure, alway!
Because dey treat all same lak' prince,
Our Wilfrid Laurier."

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