

Classic Poetry Series

Archibald Lampman

- poems -

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A January Morning

The glittering roofs are still with frost; each worn
Black chimney builds into the quiet sky
Its curling pile to crumble silently.
Far out to westward on the edge of morn,
The slender misty city towers up-borne
Glimmer faint rose against the pallid blue;
And yonder on those northern hills, the hue
Of amethyst, hang fleeces dull as horn.
And here behind me come the woodmen's sleighs
With shouts and clamorous squeakings; might and main
Up the steep slope the horses stamp and strain,
Urged on by hoarse-tongued drivers—cheeks ablaze,
Iced beards and frozen eyelids—team by team,
With frost-fringed flanks, and nostrils jetting steam.

Archibald Lampman

A Niagara Landscape

Heavy with haze that merges and melts free
 Into the measureless depth on either hand,
 The full day rests upon the luminous land
In one long noon of golden reverie.
Now hath the harvest come and gone with glee.
 The shaven fields stretch smooth and clean away,
 Purple and green, and yellow, and soft gray,
Chequered with orchards. Farther still I see
 Towns and dim villages, whose roof-tops fill
 The distant mist, yet scarcely catch the view.
Thorold set sultry on its plateau'd hill,
 And far to westward, where yon pointed towers
 Rise faint and ruddy from the vaporous blue,
 Saint Catharines, city of the host of flowers.

Archibald Lampman

A Sunset at Les Eboulements

Broad shadows fall. On all the mountain side
The scythe-swept fields are silent. Slowly home
By the long beach the high-piled hay-carts come,
Splashing the pale salt shallows. Over wide
Fawn-coloured wastes of mud the slipping tide,
Round the dun rocks and wattled fisheries,
Creeps murmuring in. And now by twos and threes,
O'er the slow spreading pools with clamorous chide,
Belated crows from strip to strip take flight.
Soon will the first star shine; yet ere the night
Reach onward to the pale-green distances,
The sun's last shaft beyond the gray sea-floor
Still dreams upon the Kamouraska shore,
And the long line of golden villages.

Archibald Lampman

A Thunderstorm

A moment the wild swallows like a flight
Of withered gust-caught leaves, serenely high,
Toss in the windrack up the muttering sky.
The leaves hang still. Above the weird twilight,
The hurrying centres of the storm unite
And spreading with huge trunk and rolling fringe,
Each wheeled upon its own tremendous hinge,
Tower darkening on. And now from heaven's height,
With the long roar of elm-trees swept and swayed,
And pelted waters, on the vanished plain
Plunges the blast. Behind the wild white flash
That splits abroad the pealing thunder-crash,
Over bleared fields and gardens disarrayed,
Column on column comes the drenching rain.

Archibald Lampman

At the Long Sault: May, 1660

Under the day-long sun there is life and mirth
In the working earth,
And the wonderful moon shines bright
Through the soft spring night,
The innocent flowers in the limitless woods are springing
Far and away
With the sound and the perfume of May,
And ever up from the south the happy birds are winging,
The waters glitter and leap and play
While the grey hawk soars.

But far in an open glade of the forest set
Where the rapid plunges and roars,
Is a ruined fort with a name that men forget,--
A shelterless pen
With its broken palisade,
Behind it, musket in hand,
Beyond message or aid
In this savage heart of the wild,
Mere youngsters, grown in a moment to men,
Grim and alert and arrayed,
The comrades of Daulac stand.
Ever before them, night and day,
The rush and skulk and cry
Of foes, not men but devils, panting for prey;
Behind them the sleepless dream
Of the little frail-walled town, far away by the plunging stream,
Of maiden and matron and child,
With ruin and murder impending, and none but they
To beat back the gathering horror
Deal death while they may,
And then die.

Day and night they have watched while the little plain
Grew dark with the rush of the foe, but their host
Broke ever and melted away, with no boast
But to number their slain;
And now as the days renew
Hunger and thirst and care
Were they never so stout, so true,
Press at their hearts; but none
Falters or shrinks or utters a coward word,
Though each setting sun
Brings from the pitiless wild new hands to the Iroquois horde,
And only to them despair.

Silent, white-faced, again and again
Charged and hemmed round by furious hands,
Each for a moment faces them all and stands
In his little desperate ring; like a tired bull moose
Whom scores of sleepless wolves, a ravening pack,
Have chased all night, all day

Through the snow-laden woods, like famine let loose;
And he turns at last in his track
Against a wall of rock and stands at bay;
Round him with terrible sinews and teeth of steel
They charge and recharge; but with many a furious plunge and wheel,
Hither and thither over the trampled snow,
He tosses them bleeding and torn;
Till, driven, and ever to and fro
Harried, wounded, and weary grown,
His mighty strength gives way
And all together they fasten upon him and drag him down.

So Daulac turned him anew
With a ringing cry to his men
In the little raging forest glen,
And his terrible sword in the twilight whistled and slew.
And all his comrades stood
With their backs to the pales, and fought
Till their strength was done;
The thews that were only mortal flagged and broke
Each struck his last wild stroke,
And they fell one by one,
And the world that had seemed so good
Passed like a dream and was naught.

And then the great night came
With the triumph-songs of the foe and the flame
Of the camp-fires.
Out of the dark the soft wind woke,
The song of the rapid rose away
And came to the spot where the comrades lay,
Beyond help or care,
With none but the red men round them
To gnash their teeth and stare.

All night by the foot of the mountain
The little town lieth at rest,
The sentries are peacefully pacing;
And neither from East nor from West

Is there rumour of death or of danger;
None dreameth tonight in his bed
That ruin was near and the heroes
That met it and stemmed it are dead.

But afar in the ring of the forest,
Where the air is so tender with May
And the waters are wild in the moonlight,
They lie in their silence of clay.

The numberless stars out of heaven
Look down with a pitiful glance;

And the lilies asleep in the forest
Are closed like the lilies of France.

Archibald Lampman

Comfort of the Fields

What would'st thou have for easement after grief,
When the rude world hath used thee with despite,
And care sits at thine elbow day and night,
Filching thy pleasures like a subtle thief?
To me, when life besets me in such wise,
'Tis sweetest to break forth, to drop the chain,
And grasp the freedom of this pleasant earth,
To roam in idleness and sober mirth,
Through summer airs and summer lands, and drain
The comfort of wide fields unto tired eyes.

By hills and waters, farms and solitudes,
To wander by the day with wilful feet;
Through fielded valleys wide with yellowing wheat;
Along gray roads that run between deep woods,
Murmurous and cool; through hallowed slopes of pine,
Where the long daylight dreams, unpierced, unstirred,
And only the rich-throated thrush is heard;
By lonely forest brooks that froth and shine
In bouldered crannies buried in the hills;
By broken beeches tangled with wild vine,
And long-strewn rivers murmurous with mills.

In upland pastures, sown with gold, and sweet
With the keen perfume of the ripening grass,
Where wings of birds and filmy shadows pass,
Spread thick as stars with shining marguerite:
To haunt old fences overgrown with brier,
Muffled in vines, and hawthorns, and wild cherries,
Rank poisonous ivies, red-bunched elder-berries,
And pièd blossoms to the heart's desire,
Gray mullein towering into yellow bloom,
Pink-tasseled milkweed, breathing dense perfume,
And swarthy vervain, tipped with violet fire.

To hear at eve the bleating of far flocks,
The mud-hen's whistle from the marsh at morn;
To skirt with deafened ears and brain o'erborne
Some foam-filled rapid charging down its rocks
With iron roar of waters; far away
Across wide-reeded meres, pensive with noon,
To hear the querulous outcry of the loon;
To lie among deep rocks, and watch all day
On liquid heights the snowy clouds melt by;
Or hear from wood-capped mountain-brows the jay
Pierce the bright morning with his jibing cry.

To feast on summer sounds; the jolted wains,
The thresher humming from the farm near by,
The prattling cricket's intermittent cry,
The locust's rattle from the sultry lanes;
Or in the shadow of some oaken spray,

To watch, as through a mist of light and dreams,
The far-off hayfields, where the dusty teams
Drive round and round the lessening squares of hay,
And hear upon the wind, now loud, now low,
With drowsy cadence half a summer's day,
The clatter of the reapers come and go.

Far violet hills, horizons filmed with showers,
The murmur of cool streams, the forest's gloom,
The voices of the breathing grass, the hum
Of ancient gardens overbanked with flowers:
Thus, with a smile as golden as the dawn,
And cool fair fingers radiantly divine,
The mighty mother brings us in her hand,
For all tired eyes and foreheads pinched and wan,
Her restful cup, her beaker of bright wine:
Drink, and be filled, and ye shall understand!

Archibald Lampman

Evening

From upland slopes I see the cows file by,
Lowling, great-chested, down the homeward trail,
By dusking fields and meadows shining pale
With moon-tipped dandelions. Flickering high,
A peevish night-hawk in the western sky
Beats up into the lucent solitudes,
Or drops with griding wing. The stilly woods
Grow dark and deep, and gloom mysteriously.
Cool night winds creep, and whisper in mine ear.
The homely cricket gossips at my feet.
From far-off pools and wastes of reeds I hear,
Clear and soft-piped, the chanting frogs break sweet
In full Pandean chorus. One by one
Shine out the stars, and the great night comes on.

Archibald Lampman

Heat

From plains that reel to southward, dim,
The road runs by me white and bare;
Up the steep hill it seems to swim
Beyond, and melt into the glare.
Upward half-way, or it may be
Nearer the summit, slowly steals
A hay-cart, moving dustily
With idly clacking wheels.
By his cart's side the wagoner
Is slouching slowly at his ease,
Half-hidden in the windless blur
Of white dust puffing to his knees.
This wagon on the height above,
From sky to sky on either hand,
Is the sole thing that seems to move
In all the heat-held land.

Beyond me in the fields the sun
Soaks in the grass and hath his will;
I count the marguerites one by one;
Even the buttercups are still.
On the brook yonder not a breath
Disturbs the spider or the midge.
The water-bugs draw close beneath
The cool gloom of the bridge.

Where the far elm-tree shadows flood
Dark patches in the burning grass,
The cows, each with her peaceful cud,
Lie waiting for the heat to pass.
From somewhere on the slope near by
Into the pale depth of the noon
A wandering thrush slides leisurely
His thin revolving tune.

In intervals of dreams I hear
The cricket from the droughty ground;
The grasshoppers spin into mine ear
A small innumerable sound.
I lift mine eyes sometimes to gaze:
The burning sky-line blinds my sight:
The woods far off are blue with haze:
The hills are drenched in light.

And yet to me not this or that
Is always sharp or always sweet;
In the sloped shadow of my hat
I lean at rest, and drain the heat;
Nay more, I think some blessed power
Hath brought me wandering idly here:
In the full furnace of this hour
My thoughts grow keen and clear.

Archibald Lampman

In Beechwood Cemetery

Here the dead sleep--the quiet dead. No sound
Disturbs them ever, and no storm dismays.
Winter mid snow caresses the tired ground,
And the wind roars about the woodland ways.
Springtime and summer and red autumn pass,
With leaf and bloom and pipe of wind and bird,
And the old earth puts forth her tender grass,
By them unfelt, unheeded and unheard.
Our centuries to them are but as strokes
In the dim gamut of some far-off chime.
Unaltering rest their perfect being cloaks--
A thing too vast to hear or feel or see--
Children of Silence and Eternity,
They know no season but the end of time.

Archibald Lampman

In November (1)

The leafless forests slowly yield
To the thick-driving snow. A little while
And night shall darken down. In shouting file
The woodmen's carts go by me homeward-wheeled,
Past the thin fading stubbles, half concealed,
Now golden-gray, sowed softly through with snow,
Where the last ploughman follows still his row,
Turning black furrows through the whitening field.
Far off the village lamps begin to gleam,
Fast drives the snow, and no man comes this way;
The hills grow wintry white, and bleak winds moan
About the naked uplands. I alone
Am neither sad, nor shelterless, nor gray,
Wrapped round with thought, content to watch and dream.

Archibald Lampman

In November (2)

With loitering step and quiet eye,
Beneath the low November sky,
I wandered in the woods, and found
A clearing, where the broken ground
Was scattered with black stumps and briers,
And the old wreck of forest fires.
It was a bleak and sandy spot,
And, all about, the vacant plot,
Was peopled and inhabited
By scores of mulleins long since dead.
A silent and forsaken brood
In that mute opening of the wood,
So shrivelled and so thin they were,
So gray, so haggard, and austere,
Not plants at all they seemed to me,
But rather some spare company
Of hermit folk, who long ago,
Wandering in bodies to and fro,
Had chanced upon this lonely way,
And rested thus, till death one day
Surprised them at their compline prayer,
And left them standing lifeless there.

There was no sound about the wood
Save the wind's secret stir. I stood
Among the mullein-stalks as still
As if myself had grown to be
One of their sombre company,
A body without wish or will
And as I stood, quite suddenly,
Down from a furrow in the sky
The sun shone out a little space
Across that silent sober place,
Over the sand heaps and brown sod,
The mulleins and dead goldenrod,
And passed beyond the thickets gray,
And lit the fallen leaves that lay,
Level and deep within the wood,
A rustling yellow multitude.

And all around me the thin light,
So sere, so melancholy bright,
Fell like the half-reflected gleam
Or shadow of some former dream;
A moment's golden reverie
Poured out on every plant and tree
A semblance of weird joy, or less,
A sort of spectral happiness;
And I, too, standing idly there,
With muffled hands in the chill air,
Felt the warm glow about my feet,
And shuddering betwixt cold and heat,

Drew my thoughts closer, like a cloak,
While something in my blood awoke,
A nameless and unnatural cheer,
A pleasure secret and austere.

Archibald Lampman

Midnight

From where I sit, I see the stars,
And down the chilly floor
The moon between the frozen bars
Is glimmering dim and hoar.
Without in many a peak`d mound
The glinting snowdrifts lie;
There is no voice or living sound;
The embers slowly die.
Yet some wild thing is in mine ear;
I hold my breath and hark;
Out of the depth I seem to hear
A crying in the dark;

No sound of man or wife or child,
No sound of beast that groans,
Or of the wind that whistles wild,
Or of the tree that moans:
I know not what it is I hear;
I bend my head and hark:
I cannot drive it from mine ear,
That crying in the dark.

Archibald Lampman

Morning on the Lièvre

Far above us where a jay
Screams his matins to the day,
Capped with gold and amethyst,
Like a vapor from the forge
Of a giant somewhere hid,
Out of hearing of the clang
Of his hammer, skirts of mist
Slowly up the woody gorge
Lift and hang.

Softly as a cloud we go,
Sky above and sky below,
Down the river; and the dip
Of the paddles scarcely breaks,
With the little silvery drip
Of the water as it shakes
From the blades, the crystal deep
Of the silence of the morn,
Of the forest yet asleep;
And the river reaches borne
In a mirror, purple gray,
Sheer away
To the misty line of light,
Where the forest and the stream
In the shadow meet and plight,
Like a dream.

From amid a stretch of reeds,
Where the lazy river sucks
All the water as it bleeds
From a little curling creek,
And the muskrats peer and sneak
In around the sunken wrecks
Of a tree that swept the skies
Long ago,
On a sudden seven ducks
With a splashy rustle rise,
Stretching out their seven necks,
One before, and two behind,
And the others all arow,
And as steady as the wind
With a swivelling whistle go,
Through the purple shadow led,
Till we only hear their whir
In behind a rocky spur,
Just ahead.

Archibald Lampman

Outlook

Not to be conquered by these headlong days,
But to stand free: to keep the mind at brood
On life's deep meaning, nature's altitude
Of loveliness, and time's mysterious ways;
At every thought and deed to clear the haze
Out of our eyes, considering only this,
What man, what life, what love, what beauty is,
This is to live, and win the final praise.
Though strife, ill fortune, and harsh human need
Beat down the soul, at moments blind and dumb
With agony; yet, patience—there shall come
Many great voices from life's outer sea,
Hours of strange triumph, and, when few men heed,
Murmurs and glimpses of eternity.

Archibald Lampman

Reality

I stand at noon upon the heated flags
At the bleached crossing of two streets, and dream
With brain scarce conscious now the hurrying stream
Of noonday passengers is done. Two hags
Stand at an open doorway piled with bags
And jabber hideously. Just at their feet
A small, half-naked child screams in the street,
A blind man yonder, a mere hunch of rags,
Keeps the scant shadow of the eaves, and scowls,
Counting his coppers. Through the open glare
Thunders an empty wagon, from whose trail
A lean dog shoots into the startled square,
Wildly revolves and soothes his hapless tail,
Piercing the noon with intermittent howls.

Archibald Lampman

Storm

Out of the gray northwest, where many a day gone by
Ye tugged and howled in your tempestuous grot,
And evermore the huge frost giants lie,
Your wizard guards in vigilance unforgot,
Out of the gray northwest, for now the bonds are riven,
On wide white wings your thongless flight is driven,
That lulls but resteth not.
And all the gray day long, and all the dense wild night,
Ye wheel and hurry with the sheeted snow,
By cedared waste and many a pine-dark height,
Across white rivers frozen fast below;
Over the lonely forests, where the flowers yet sleeping
Turn in their narrow beds with dreams of weeping
In some remembered woe;

Across the unfenced wide marsh levels, where the dry
Brown ferns sigh out, and last year's sedges scold
In some drear language, rustling haggardly
Their thin dead leaves and dusky hoods of gold;
Across gray beechwoods where the pallid leaves unfalling
In the blind gusts like homeless ghosts are calling
With voices cracked and old;

Across the solitary clearings, where the low
Fierce gusts howl through the blinded woods, and round
The buried shanties all day long the snow
Sifts and piles up in many a spectral mound;
Across lone villages in eerie wildernesses
Whose hidden life no living shape confesses
Nor any human sound;

Across the serried masses of dim cities, blown
Full of the snow that ever shifts and swells,
While far above them all their towers of stone
Stand and beat back your fierce and tyrannous spells,
And hour by hour send out, like voices torn and broken
Of battling giants that have grandly spoken,
The veering sound of bells;

So day and night, O Wind, with hiss and moan you fleet,
Where once long gone on many a green-leaved day
Your gentler brethren wandered with light feet
And sang, with voices soft and sweet as they,
The same blind thought that you with wilder might are speaking,
Seeking the same strange thing that you are seeking
In this your stormier way.

O Wind, wild-voiced brother, in your northern cave,
My spirit also being so beset
With pride and pain, I heard you beat and rave,
Grinding your chains with furious howl and fret,
Knowing full well that all earth's moving things inherit

The same chained might and madness of the spirit,
That none may quite forget.

You in your cave of snows, we in our narrow girth
Of need and sense, for ever chafe and pine;
Only in moods of some demonic birth
Our souls take fire, our flashing wings untwine;
Even like you, mad Wind, above our broken prison,
With streaming hair and maddened eyes uprisen,
We dream ourselves divine;

Mad moods that come and go in some mysterious way,
That flash and fall, none knoweth how or why,
O Wind, our brother, they are yours today,
The stormy joy, the sweeping mastery;
Deep in our narrow cells, we hear you, we awaken,
With hands afret and bosoms strangely shaken,
We answer to your cry.

I most that love you, Wind, when you are fierce and free,
In these dull fetters cannot long remain;
Lo, I will rise and break my thongs and flee
Forth to your drift and beating, till my brain
Even for an hour grow wild in your divine embraces,
And then creep back into mine earthly traces,
And bind me with my chain.

Nay, Wind, I hear you, desperate brother, in your might
Whistle and howl; I shall not tarry long,
And though the day be blind and fierce, the night
Be dense and wild, I still am glad and strong
To meet you face to face; through all your gust and drifting
With brow held high, my joyous hands uplifting,
I cry you song for song.

Archibald Lampman

Temagami

Far in the grim Northwest beyond the lines
That turn the rivers eastward to the sea,
Set with a thousand islands, crowned with pines,
Lies the deep water, wild Temagami:
Wild for the hunter's roving, and the use
Of trappers in its dark and trackless vales,
Wild with the trampling of the giant moose,
And the weird magic of old Indian tales.
All day with steady paddles toward the west
Our heavy-laden long canoe we pressed:
All day we saw the thunder-travelled sky
Purpled with storm in many a trailing tress,
And saw at eve the broken sunset die
In crimson on the silent wilderness.

Archibald Lampman

The City at the End of Things

Beside the pounding cataracts
Of midnight streams unknown to us
'Tis builded in the leafless tracts
And valleys huge of Tartarus.
Lurid and lofty and vast it seems;
It hath no rounded name that rings,
But I have heard it called in dreams
The City of the End of Things.
Its roofs and iron towers have grown
None knoweth how high within the night,
But in its murky streets far down
A flaming terrible and bright
Shakes all the stalking shadows there,
Across the walls, across the floors,
And shifts upon the upper air
From out a thousand furnace doors;
And all the while an awful sound
Keeps roaring on continually,
And crashes in the ceaseless round
Of a gigantic harmony.
Through its grim depths re-echoing
And all its weary height of walls,
With measured roar and iron ring,
The inhuman music lifts and falls.
Where no thing rests and no man is,
And only fire and night hold sway;
The beat, the thunder and the hiss
Cease not, and change not, night nor day.
And moving at unheard commands,
The abysses and vast fires between,
Flit figures that with clanking hands
Obey a hideous routine;
They are not flesh, they are not bone,
They see not with the human eye,
And from their iron lips is blown
A dreadful and monotonous cry;
And whoso of our mortal race
Should find that city unaware,
Lean Death would smite him face to face,
And blanch him with its venomous air:
Or caught by the terrific spell,
Each thread of memory snapt and cut,
His soul would shrivel and its shell
Go rattling like an empty nut.

It was not always so, but once,
In days that no man thinks upon,
Fair voices echoed from its stones,
The light above it leaped and shone:
Once there were multitudes of men,
That built that city in their pride,
Until its might was made, and then

They withered age by age and died.
But now of that prodigious race,
Three only in an iron tower,
Set like carved idols face to face,
Remain the masters of its power;
And at the city gate a fourth,
Gigantic and with dreadful eyes,
Sits looking toward the lightless north,
Beyond the reach of memories;
Fast rooted to the lurid floor,
A bulk that never moves a jot,
In his pale body dwells no more,
Or mind or soul,—an idiot!
But sometime in the end those three
Shall perish and their hands be still,
And with the master's touch shall flee
Their incommunicable skill.
A stillness absolute as death
Along the slacking wheels shall lie,
And, flagging at a single breath,
The fires shall moulder out and die.
The roar shall vanish at its height,
And over that tremendous town
The silence of eternal night
Shall gather close and settle down.
All its grim grandeur, tower and hall,
Shall be abandoned utterly,
And into rust and dust shall fall
From century to century;
Nor ever living thing shall grow,
Nor trunk of tree, nor blade of grass;
No drop shall fall, no wind shall blow,
Nor sound of any foot shall pass:
Alone of its accursed state,
One thing the hand of Time shall spare,
For the grim Idiot at the gate
Is deathless and eternal there.

Archibald Lampman

The Frogs

I1.

Breathers of wisdom won without a quest,
· Quaint uncouth dreamers, voices high and strange;
· Flutists of lands where beauty hath no change,
· And wintry grief is a forgotten guest,
· Sweet murmurers of everlasting rest,
· For whom glad days have ever yet to run,
· And moments are as aeons, and the sun
· But ever sunken half-way toward the west.1.
Often to me who heard you in your day,

· With close rapt ears, it could not choose but seem

· That earth, our mother, searching in what way

· Men's hearts might know her spirit's inmost-dream;

· Ever at rest beneath life's change and stir,

· Made you her soul, and bade you pipe for her.II2.
In those mute days when spring was in her glee,

· And hope was strong, we knew not why or how,
· And earth, the mother, dreamed with brooding brow,

· Musing on life, and what the hours might be,

· When love should ripen to maternity,

· Then like high flutes in silvery interchange

· Ye piped with voices still and sweet and strange,

· And ever as ye piped, on every tree2.
The great buds swelled; among the pensive woods

· The spirits of first flowers awoke and flung

From buried faces the close-fitting hoods,

And listened to your piping till they fell,

The frail spring-beauty with her perfumed bell,

The wind-flower, and the spotted adder-tongue.III3.
All the day long, wherever pools might be

Among the golden meadows, where the air

Stood in a dream, as it were moor`d there

For ever in a noon-tide reverie,

Or where the birds made riot of their glee

In the still woods, and the hot sun shone down,

Crossed with warm lucent shadows on the brown

Leaf-paven pools, that bubbled dreamily, 3.
Or far away in whispering river meads

And watery marshes where the brooding noon,

Full with the wonder of its own sweet boon,

Nestled and slept among the noiseless reeds,

Ye sat and murmured, motionless as they,

With eyes that dreamed beyond the night and day.IV4.
And when day passed and over heaven's height,

Thin with the many stars and cool with dew,

The fingers of the deep hours slowly drew

The wonder of the ever-healing night,

No grief or loneliness or rapt delight

Or weight of silence ever brought to you
·
Slumber or rest; only your voices grew
·
More high and solemn; slowly with hushed flight⁴.
Ye saw the echoing hours go by, long-drawn,
·
Nor ever stirred, watching with fathomless eyes,
·
And with your countless clear antiphonies
·
Filling the earth and heaven, even till dawn,
·
Last-risen, found you with its first pale gleam,
·
Still with soft throats unaltered in your dream.⁵
And slowly as we heard you, day by day,
·
The stillness of enchanted reveries
·
Bound brain and spirit and half-closed eyes,
·
In some divine sweet wonder-dream astray;
·
To us no sorrow or unprepared dismay
·
Nor any discord came, but evermore
·
The voices of mankind, the outer roar,
·
Grew strange and murmurous, faint and far away. 5.
Morning and noon and midnight exquisitely,
·
Rapt with your voices, this alone we knew,
·
Cities might change and fall, and men might die,
·
Secure were we, content to dream with you
·
That change and pain are shadows faint and fleet,
·
And dreams are real, and life is only sweet.

Archibald Lampman

The Growth of Love XI

XI

Belovèd, those who moan of love's brief day
Shall find but little grace with me, I guess,
Who know too well this passion's tenderness
To deem that it shall lightly pass away,
A moment's interlude in life's dull play;
Though many loves have lingered to distress,
So shall not ours, sweet Lady, ne'ertheless,
But deepen with us till both heads be grey.
For perfect love is like a fair green plant,
That fades not with its blossoms, but lives on,
And gentle lovers shall not come to want,
Though fancy with its first mad dream be gone;
Sweet is the flower, whose radiant glory flies,
But sweeter still the green that never dies.

Archibald Lampman

The Railway Station

The darkness brings no quiet here, the light
No waking: ever on my blinded brain
The flare of lights, the rush, and cry, and strain,
The engines' scream, the hiss and thunder smite:
I see the hurrying crowds, the clasp, the flight,
Faces that touch, eyes that are dim with pain:
I see the hoarse wheels turn, and the great train
Move labouring out into the bourneless night.
So many souls within its dim recesses,
So many bright, so many mournful eyes:
Mine eyes that watch grow fixed with dreams and guesses;
What threads of life, what hidden histories,
What sweet or passionate dreams and dark distresses,
What unknown thoughts, what various agonies!

Archibald Lampman

To a Millionaire

The world in gloom and splendour passes by,
And thou in the midst of it with brows that gleam,
A creature of that old distorted dream
That makes the sound of life an evil cry.
Good men perform just deeds, and brave men die,
And win not honour such as gold can give,
While the vain multitudes plod on, and live,
And serve the curse that pins them down: But I
Think only of the unnumbered broken hearts,
The hunger and the mortal strife for bread,
Old age and youth alike mistaught, misfed,
By want and rags and homelessness made vile,
The griefs and hates, and all the meaner parts
That balance thy one grim misgotten pile.

Archibald Lampman

To the Ottawa

Dear dark-brown waters full of all the stain
Of sombre spruce-woods and the forest fens,
Laden with sound from far-off northern glens
Where winds and craggy cataracts complain,
Voices of streams and mountain pines astrain,
The pines that brood above the roaring foam
Of La Montagne or Les Erables; thine home
Is distant yet, a shelter far to gain.
Aye still to eastward, past the shadowy lake
And the long slopes of Rigaud toward the sun,
The mightier stream, thy comrade, waits for thee,
The beryl waters that espouse and take
Thine in their deep embrace, and bear thee on
In that great bridal journey to the sea.

Archibald Lampman

Voices of Earth

We have not heard the music of the spheres,
The song of star to star, but there are sounds
More deep than human joy and human tears,
That Nature uses in her common rounds;
The fall of streams, the cry of winds that strain
The oak, the roaring of the sea's surge, might
Of thunder breaking afar off, or rain
That falls by minutes in the summer night.
These are the voices of earth's secret soul,
Uttering the mystery from which she came.
To him who hears them grief beyond control,
Or joy inscrutable without a name,
Wakes in his heart thoughts bedded there, impearled,
Before the birth and making of the world.

Archibald Lampman

We too shall Sleep

Hi There! I see you're enjoying the site, and just wanted to extend an invitation to register for our free site. The members of oldpoetry strive to make this a fun place to learn and share - hope you join us! - Kevin

Archibald Lampman

Winter Evening

To-night the very horses springing by
Toss gold from whitened nostrils. In a dream
The streets that narrow to the westward gleam
Like rows of golden palaces; and high
From all the crowded chimneys tower and die
A thousand aureoles. Down in the west
The brimming plains beneath the sunset rest,
One burning sea of gold. Soon, soon shall fly
The glorious vision, and the hours shall feel
A mightier master; soon from height to height,
With silence and the sharp unpitying stars,
Stern creeping frosts, and winds that touch like steel,
Out of the depth beyond the eastern bars,
Glittering and still shall come the awful night.

Archibald Lampman

Winter Uplands

The frost that stings like fire upon my cheek,
The loneliness of this forsaken ground,
The long white drift upon whose powdered peak
I sit in the great silence as one bound;
The rippled sheet of snow where the wind blew
Across the open fields for miles ahead;
The far-off city towered and roofed in blue
A tender line upon the western red;
The stars that singly, then in flocks appear,
Like jets of silver from the violet dome,
So wonderful, so many and so near,
And then the golden moon to light me home--
The crunching snowshoes and the stinging air,
And silence, frost, and beauty everywhere.

Archibald Lampman

Winter-Solitude

I saw the city's towers on a luminous pale-gray sky;
Beyond them a hill of the softest mistiest green,
With naught but frost and the coming of night between,
And a long thin cloud above the colour of August rye.
I sat in the midst of a plain on my snowshoes with bended knee
Where the thin wind stung my cheeks,
And the hard snow ran in little ripples and peaks,
Like the fretted floor of a white and petrified sea.
And a strange peace gathered about my soul and shone,
As I sat reflecting there,
In a world so mystically fair,
So deathly silent--I so utterly alone.

Archibald Lampman