

Classic Poetry Series

Archibald Lampman

- poems -

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Archibald Lampman (17 November 1861 – 10 February 1899)

Archibald Lampman, FRSC was a Canadian poet. "He has been described as 'the Canadian Keats,' and he is perhaps the most outstanding exponent of the Canadian school of nature poets." The Canadian Encyclopedia says that he is "generally considered the finest of Canada's late 19th-century poets in English."

Lampman is classed as one of Canada's Confederation Poets, a group which also includes Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, and Duncan Campbell Scott.

Life

Archibald Lampman was born at Morpeth, Ontario, a village near Chatham, the son of Archibald Lampman, an Anglican clergyman. "The Morpeth that Lampman knew was a small town set in the rolling farm country of what is now western Ontario, not far from the shores of Lake Erie. The little red church just east of the town, on the Talbot Road, was his father's charge."

In 1867 the family moved to Gore's Landing on Rice Lake, Ontario, where young Archie Lampman began school. In 1868 he contracted rheumatic fever, which left him lame for some years and with a permanently weakened heart.

Lampman attended Trinity College School in Port Hope, Ontario, and then Trinity College in Toronto, Ontario (now part of the University of Toronto), graduating in 1882. In 1883, after a frustrating attempt to teach high school in Orangeville, Ontario, he took an appointment as a low-paid clerk in the Post Office Department in Ottawa, a position he held for the rest of his life.

Lampman "was slight of form and of middle height. He was quiet and undemonstrative in manner, but had a fascinating personality. Sincerity and high ideals characterized his life and work."

On Sep. 3, 1887, Lampman married 20-year-old Maude Emma Playter. "They had a daughter, Natalie Charlotte, born in 1892. Arnold Gesner, born May 1894, was the first boy, but he died in August. A third child, Archibald Otto, was born in 1898."

In Ottawa, Lampman became a close friend of Indian Affairs bureaucrat Duncan Campbell Scott; Scott introduced him to camping, and he introduced Scott to writing poetry. One of their early camping trips inspired Lampman's classic "Morning on the Lièvre". Lampman also met and befriended poet [William Wilfred Campbell](http://www.poemhunter.com/william-wilfred-campbell/).

Lampman, Campbell, and Scott together wrote a literary column, "At the Mermaid Inn," for the Toronto Globe from February 1892 until July 1893. (The name was a reference to the Elizabethan-era Mermaid Tavern.) As Lampman wrote to a friend: "Campbell is deplorably poor.... Partly in order to help his pockets a little Mr. Scott and I decided to see if we could get the Toronto "Globe" to give us space for a couple of columns of paragraphs & short articles, at whatever pay we could get for them. They agreed to it; and Campbell, Scott and I have been carrying on the thing for several weeks now."

"In the last years of his short life there is evidence of a spiritual malaise which was compounded by the death of an infant son [Arnold, commemorated in the poem "White Pansies"] and his own deteriorating health."

Lampman died in Ottawa at the age of 37 due to a weak heart, an after-effect of his childhood rheumatic fever. He is buried, fittingly, at Beechwood Cemetery, in Ottawa, a site he wrote about in the poem "In Beechwood Cemetery" (which is inscribed at the cemetery's entranceway). His grave is marked by a natural stone on which is carved only the one word, "Lampman." A plaque on the site carries a few lines from his poem "In November":

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.

Writing

In May 1881, when Lampman was at Trinity College, someone lent him a copy of Charles G.D. Roberts's recently published first book, *Orion and Other Poems*. The effect on the 19-year-old student was immediate and profound:

"I sat up most of the night reading and re-reading "Orion" in a state of the wildest excitement and when I went to bed I could not sleep. It seemed to me a wonderful thing that such work could be done by a Canadian, by a young man, one of ourselves. It was like a voice from some new paradise of art, calling to us to be up and doing. A little after sunrise I got up and went out into the college grounds ... everything was transfigured for me beyond description, bathed in an old world radiance of beauty; the magic of the lines was sounding in my ears, those divine verses, as they seemed to me, with their Tennyson-like richness and strange earth-loving Greekish flavour. I have never forgotten that morning, and its influence has always remained with me."

Lampman sent Roberts a fan letter, which "initiated a correspondence between the two young men, but they probably did not meet until after Roberts moved to Toronto in late September 1883 to become the editor of Goldwin Smith's *The Week*."

Inspired, Lampman also began writing poetry, and soon after began publishing it: first "in the pages of his college magazine, *Rouge et Noir*;" then "graduating to the more prestigious pages of *The Week*" – (his sonnet "A Monition," later retitled "The Coming of Winter," appeared in its first issue) – and finally, by the late 1880s "winning an audience in the major magazines

of the day, such as Atlantic Monthly, Harper's, and Scribner's."

Lampman published mainly nature poetry in the current late-Romantic style. "The prime literary antecedents of Lampman lie in the work of the English poets Keats, [Wordsworth](http://www.poemhunter.com/william-wordsworth/), and Arnold," says the Gale Encyclopedia of Biography, "but he also brought new and distinctively Canadian elements to the tradition. Lampman, like others of his school, relied on the Canadian landscape to provide him with much of the imagery, stimulus, and philosophy which characterize his work.... Acutely observant in his method, Lampman created out of the minutiae of nature careful compositions of color, sound, and subtle movement. Evocatively rich, his poems are frequently sustained by a mood of reverie and withdrawal, while their themes are those of beauty, wisdom, and reassurance, which the poet discovered in his contemplation of the changing seasons and the harmony of the countryside."

The Canadian Encyclopedia calls his poems "for the most part close-packed melancholy meditations on natural objects, emphasizing the calm of country life in contrast to the restlessness of city living. Limited in range, they are nonetheless remarkable for descriptive precision and emotional restraint. Although characterized by a skilful control of rhythm and sound, they tend to display a sameness of thought."

"Lampman wrote more than 300 poems in this last period of his life, although scarcely half of these were published prior to his death. For single poems or groups of poems he found outlets in the literary magazines of the day: in Canada, chiefly the Week; in the United States, Scribner's Magazine, The Youth's Companion, the Independent, the Atlantic Monthly, and Harper's Magazine. In 1888, with the help of a legacy left to his wife, he published Among the millet and other poems," his first book, at his own expense. The book is notable for the poems "Morning on the Lièvre," "Heat," the sonnet "In November," and the long sonnet sequence "The Frogs"

"By this time he had achieved a literary reputation, and his work appeared regularly in Canadian periodicals and prestigious American magazines.... In 1895 Lampman was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and his second collection of poems, Lyrics of Earth, was brought out by a Boston publisher."

The book was not a success. "The sales of Lyrics of Earth were disappointing and the only critical notices were four brief though favourable reviews. In size, the volume is slighter than Among the Millet — twenty-nine poems in contrast to forty-eight — and in quality fails to surpass the earlier work." (Lyrics does, though, contain some of Lampman's most beautiful poems, such as "After Rain" and "The Sun Cup.")

"A third volume, Alcyone and other poems, in press at the time of his death" in 1899, showed Lampman starting to move in new directions, with the nature verses interspersed with philosophical poetry like "Voices of Earth" and "The Clearer Self" and poems of social criticism like "The City" and what may be his best-known poem, the dystopian vision of "The City at the End of Things." "As a corollary to his preoccupation with nature," notes the Gale Encyclopedia, "Lampman [had] developed a critical stance toward an emerging urban civilization and a social order against which he pitted his own idealism. He was an outspoken socialist, a feminist, and a social critic." Canadian critic Malcolm Ross wrote that "in poems like 'The City at the End of Things' and 'Epitaph on a Rich Man' Lampman seems to have a social and political insight absent in his fellows."

However, Lampman died before Alcyone appeared, and it "was held back by Scott (12 specimen copies were printed posthumously in Ottawa in 1899) in favour of a comprehensive memorial volume planned for 1900." The latter was a planned collected poems "which he was editing in the hope that its sale would provide Maud with some much-needed cash. Besides Alcyone, it included Among the Millet and Lyrics of Earth in their entirety, plus seventy-four sonnets Lampman had tried to publish separately, twenty-three

miscellaneous poems and ballads, and two long narrative poems ("David and Abigail" and "The Story of an Affinity")." Among the previously unpublished sonnets were some of Lampman's finest work, including "Winter Uplands", "The Railway Station," and "A Sunset at Les Eboulements."

"Published by Morang & Company of Toronto in 1900," The Collected Poems of Archibald Lampman "was a substantial tome — 473 pages — and ran through several editions. Scott's 'Memoir,' which prefaces the volume, would prove to be an invaluable source of information about the poet's life and personality."

Scott published one further volume of Lampman's poetry, *At the Long Sault and Other Poems*, in 1943 — "and on this occasion, as on other occasions previously, he did not hesitate to make what he felt were improvements on the manuscript versions of the poems." The book is remarkable mainly for its title poem, "At the Long Sault: May 1660," a dramatic retelling of the Battle of Long Sault, which belongs with the great Canadian historical poems. It was co-edited by E.K. Brown, who the same year published his own volume *On Canadian Poetry*: a book that was a major boost to Lampman's reputation. Brown considered Lampman and Scott the top Confederation Poets, well ahead of Roberts and Carman, and his view came to predominate over the next few decades.

Lampman never considered himself more than a minor poet, as he once confessed in a letter to a friend: "I am not a great poet and I never was. Greatness in poetry must proceed from greatness of character — from force, fearlessness, brightness. I have none of those qualities. I am, if anything, the very opposite, I am weak, I am a coward, I am a hypochondriac. I am a minor poet of a superior order, and that is all." However, others' opinion of his work has been higher than his own.

Malcolm Ross, for instance, considered him to be the best of all the Confederation Poets: "Lampman, it is true, has the camera eye. But Lampman is no mere photographer. With Scott (and more completely than Scott), he has, poetically, met the demands of his place and his time.... Like Roberts (and more intensively than Roberts), he searches for the idea.... Ideas are germinal for him, infecting the tissue of his thought.... Like the existentialist of our day, Lampman is not so much 'in search of himself' as engaged strenuously in the creation of the self. Every idea is approached as potentially the substance of a 'clearer self.' Even landscape is made into a symbol of the deep, interior processes of the self, or is used ... to induce a settling of the troubled surfaces of the mind and a miraculous transparency that opens into the depths." the poem *TO A MILLIONAIRE* is one of the noteworthy poem in his poetry works.

Recognition

Lampman was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1895.

He was designated a Person of National Historic Significance in 1920.

A literary prize, the Archibald Lampman Award, is awarded annually by Ottawa-area poetry magazine *Arc* in Lampman's honour.

Since 1999, the annual "Archibald Lampman Poetry Reading" has brought leading Canadian poets to Trinity College, Toronto, under the sponsorship of the John W. Graham Library and the Friends of the Library, Trinity College.

His name is also carried on in the town of Lampman, Saskatchewan, a small community of approximately 730 people, situated near the City of Estevan.

Canada Post issued a postage stamp in his honour on July 7, 1989. The stamp depicts Lampman's portrait on a backdrop of nature.

Canadian singer/songwriter Loreena McKennitt adapted Lampman's poem "Snow" as a song, writing original music while keeping as the lyrics the poem verbatim. This adaptation appears on McKennitt's album *To Drive the Cold*

Winter Away (1987) and also in a different version on her EP, A Winter Garden: Five Songs for the Season (1995).

Works:

Among the Millett, and Other Poems (1888)
Lyrics of Earth (1895)
Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott, Two poems (1899)
The Poems of Archibald Lampman (1900)
Lyrics of Earth: Sonnets and Ballads (1925)
At the Long Sault and Other New Poems (1943)
Selected Poems of Archibald Lampman (1947)
Lampman's Kate: Late Love Poems of Archibald Lampman (1975)
Lampman's Sonnets: The Complete Sonnets of Archibald Lampman (1976)
The Story of an Affinity (1986)
Selected Poetry of Archibald Lampman (1990)
Prose
Archibald Lampman's letters to Edward William Thomson (1956)
Selected Prose of Archibald Lampman (1975).
At the Mermaid Inn: Wilfred Campbell, Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott in the Globe 1892-3, (1979)
An annotated edition of the correspondence between Archibald Lampman and Edward William Thomson, 1890-1898 (1980)
The Essays and Reviews of Archibald Lampman (1996)
The Fairy Tales of Archibald Lampman (1999)

A Ballade of Waiting

No girdle hath weaver or goldsmith wrought
So rich as the arms of my love can be;
No gems with a lovelier lustre fraught
Than her eyes, when they answer me liquidly.
Dear lady of love, be kind to me
In days when the waters of hope abate,
And doubt like a shimmer on sand shall be,
In the year yet, Lady, to dream and wait.

Sweet mouth, that the wear of the world hath taught
No glitter of wile or traitorie,
More soft than a cloud in the sunset caught,
Or the heart of a crimson peony;
Oh turn not its beauty away from me;
To kiss it and cling to it early and late
Shall make sweet minutes of days that flee,
In the year yet, Lady, to dream and wait.

Rich hair, that a painter of old had sought
For the weaving of some soft phantasy,
Most fair when the streams of it run distraught
On the firm sweet shoulders yellowly;
Dear Lady, gather it close to me,
Weaving a nest for the double freight
Of cheeks and lips that are one and free,
For the year yet, Lady, to dream and wait.

Envoi.

So time shall be swift till thou mate with me,
For love is mightiest next to fate,
And none shall be happier, Love, than we,
In the year yet, Lady, to dream and wait.

Archibald Lampman

A Forecast

What days await this woman, whose strange feet
Breathe spells, whose presence makes men dream like wine,
Tall, free and slender as the forest pine,
Whose form is moulded music, through whose sweet
Frank eyes I feel the very heart's least beat,
Keen, passionate, full of dreams and fire:
How in the end, and to what man's desire
Shall all this yield, whose lips shall these lips meet?

One thing I know: if he be great and pure,
This love, this fire, this beauty shall endure;
Triumph and hope shall lead him by the palm:
But if not this, some differing thing he be,
That dream shall break in terror; he shall see
The whirlwind ripen, where he sowed the calm.

Archibald Lampman

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 Night of Storm

Oh city, whom grey stormy hands have sown,
With restless drift, scarce broken now of any,
Out of the dark thy windows dim and many
Gleam red across the storm. Sound is there none,
Save evermore the fierce wind's sweep and moan,
From whose grey hands the keen white snow is shaken
In desperate gusts, that fitfully lull and waken,
Dense as night's darkness round they towers of stone.

Darkling and strange art thou thus vexed and chidden;
More dark and strange thy veiled agony,
City of storm, in whose grey heart are hidden
What stormier woes, what lives that groan and beat,
Stern and thin-cheeked, against time's heavier sleet,
Rude fates, hard hearts, and prisoning poverty.

Archibald Lampman

A Prayer

Oh earth, oh dewy mother, breathe on us
Something of all thy beauty and thy might,
Us that are part of day, but most of night,
Not strong like thee, but ever burdened thus
With glooms and cares, things pale and dolorous
Whose gladdest moments are not wholly bright;
Something of all thy freshness and thy light,
Oh earth, oh mighty mother, breathe on us.

Oh mother, who wast long before our day,
And after us full many an age shalt be.
Careworn and blind, we wander from thy way:
Born of thy strength, yet weak and halt are we
Grant us, oh mother, therefore, us who pray,
Some little of thy light and majesty.

Archibald Lampman

A Re-Assurance

With what doubting eyes, oh sparrow,
Thou regardest me,
Underneath yon spray of yarrow,
Dipping cautiously.

Fear me not, oh little sparrow,
Bathe and never fear,
For to me both pool and yarrow
And thyself are dear.

Archibald Lampman

A Song

Oh night and sleep,
Ye are so soft and deep,
I am so weary, come ye soon to me.
Oh hours that creep,
With so much time to weep,
I am so tired, can ye no swifter be?

Come, night, anear;
I'll whisper in thine ear
What makes me so unhappy, full of care;
Dear night, I die
For love that all men buy
With tears, and know not it is dark despair.

Dear night, I pray,
How is it that men say
That love is sweet? It is not sweet to me.
For one boy's sake
A poor girl's heart must break;
So sweet, so true, and yet it could not be!

Oh, I loved well,
Such love as none can tell:
It was so true, it could not make him know:
For he was blind,
All light and all unkind:
Oh, had he known, would he have hurt me so?

Oh night and sleep,
Ye are so soft and deep,
I am so weary, come ye soon to me.
Oh hours that creep,
With so much time to weep,
I am so tired, can ye no swifter be?

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

A Vision Of Twilight

By a void and soundless river
On the outer edge of space,
Where the body comes not ever,
But the absent dream hath place,
Stands a city, tall and quiet,
And its air is sweet and dim;
Never sound of grief or riot
Makes it mad, or makes it grim.

And the tender skies thereover
Neither sun, nor star, behold--
Only dusk it hath for cover,--
But a glamour soft with gold,
Through a mist of dreamier essence
Than the dew of twilight, smiles
On strange shafts and domes and crescents,
Lifting into eerie piles.

In its courts and hallowed places
Dreams of distant worlds arise,
Shadows of transfigured faces,
Glimpses of immortal eyes,
Echoes of serenest pleasure,
Notes of perfect speech that fall,
Through an air of endless leisure,
Marvellously musical.

And I wander there at even,
Sometimes when my heart is clear,
When a wider round of heaven
And a vaster world are near,
When from many a shadow steeple
Sounds of dreamy bells begin,
And I love the gentle people
That my spirit finds therein.

Men of a diviner making
Than the sons of pride and strife,
Quick with love and pity, breaking
From a knowledge old as life;
Women of a spiritual rareness,
Whom old passion and old woe
Moulded to a slenderer fairness
Than the dearest shapes we know.

In its domed and towered centre
Lies a garden wide and fair,
Open for the soul to enter,
And the watchful townsmen there
Greet the stranger gloomed and fretting
From this world of stormy hands,
With a look that deals forgetting

And a touch that understands.

For they see with power, not borrowed
From a record taught or told,
But they loved and laughed and sorrowed
In a thousand worlds of old;
Now they rest and dream for ever,
And with hearts serene and whole
See the struggle, the old fever,
Clear as on a painted scroll.

Wandering by that grey and solemn
Water, with its ghostly quays--
Vistas of vast arch and column,
Shadowed by unearthly trees--
Biddings of sweet power compel me,
And I go with bated breath,
Listening to the tales they tell me,
Parables of Life and Death.

In a tongue that once was spoken,
Ere the world was cooled by Time,
When the spirit flowed unbroken
Through the flesh, and the Sublime
Made the eyes of men far-seeing,
And their souls as pure as rain,
They declare the ends of being,
And the sacred need of pain.

For they know the sweetest reasons
For the products most malign--
They can tell the paths and seasons
Of the farthest suns that shine.
How the moth-wing's iridescence
By an inward plan was wrought,
And they read me curious lessons
In the secret ways of thought.

When day turns, and over heaven
To the balmy western verge
Sail the victor fleets of even,
And the pilot stars emerge,
Then my city rounds and rises,
Like a vapour formed afar,
And its sudden girth surprises,
And its shadowy gates unbar.

Dreamy crowds are moving yonder
In a faint and phantom blue;
Through the dusk I lean, and wonder
If their winsome shapes are true;
But in veiling indecision

Come my questions back again--
Which is real? The fleeting vision?
Or the fleeting world of men?

Archibald Lampman

Abu Midjan

Underneath a tree at noontide
Abu Midjan sits distressed,
Fetters on his wrists and ankles,
And his chin upon his breast;

For the Emir's guard had taken,
As they passed from line to line,
Reeling in the camp at midnight,
Abu Midjan drunk with wine.

Now he sits and rolls uneasy,
Very fretful, for he hears,
Near at hand, the shout of battle,
And the din of driving spears.

Both his heels in wrath are digging
Trenches in the grassy soil,
And his fingers clutch and loosen,
Dreaming of the Persian spoil.

To the garden, over-weary
Of the sound of hoof and sword,
Came the Emir's gentle lady,
Anxious for her fighting lord.

Very sadly, Abu Midjan,
Hanging down his head for shame,
Spoke in words of soft appealing
To the tender-hearted dame:

'Lady, while the doubtful battle
Ebbs and flows upon the plains,
Here in sorrow, meek and idle,
Abu Midjan sits in chains.

'Surely Saad would be safer
For the strength of even me;
Give me then his armour, Lady,
And his horse, and set me free.

'When the day of fight is over,
With the spoil that he may earn,
To his chains, if he is living,
Abu Midjan will return.'

She, in wonder and compassion,
Had not heart to say him nay;
So, with Saad's horse and armour,
Abu Midjan rode away.

Happy from the fight at even,
Saad told his wife at meat,

How the army had been succoured
In the fiercest battle-heat,

By a stranger horseman, coming
When their hands were most in need,
And he bore the arms of Saad,
And was mounted on his steed;

How the faithful battled forward,
Mighty where the stranger trod,
Till they deemed him more than mortal,
And an angel sent from God.

Then the lady told her master
How she gave the horse and mail
To the drunkard, and had taken
Abu Midjan's word for bail.

To the garden went the Emir,
Running to the tree, and found
Torn with many wounds and bleeding,
Abu Midjan meek and bound.

And the Emir loosed him, saying,
As he gave his hand for sign,
'Never more shall Saad's fetters
Chafe thee for a draught of wine.'

Three times to the ground in silence
Abu Midjan bent his head;
Then with glowing eyes uplifted,
To the Emir spake and said:

'While an earthly lord controlled me,
All things for the wine I bore;
Now, since God alone shall judge me,
Abu Midjan drinks no more.'

Archibald Lampman

After Rain

For three whole days across the sky,
In sullen packs that loomed and broke,
With flying fringes dim as smoke,
The columns of the rain went by;
At every hour the wind awoke;
The darkness passed upon the plain;
The great drops rattled at the pane.

Now piped the wind, or far aloof
Fell to a sough remote and dull;
And all night long with rush and lull
The rain kept drumming on the roof:
I heard till ear and sense were full
The clash or silence of the leaves,
The gurgle in the creaking eaves.

But when the fourth day came—at noon,
The darkness and the rain were by;
The sunward roofs were steaming dry;
And all the world was flecked and strewn
With shadows from a fleecy sky.
The haymakers were forth and gone,
And every rillet laughed and shone.

Then, too, on me that loved so well
The world, despairing in her blight,
Uplifted with her least delight,
On me, as on the earth, there fell
New happiness of mirth and might;
I strode the valleys pied and still;
I climbed upon the breezy hill.

I watched the gray hawk wheel and drop,
Sole shadow on the shining world;
I saw the mountains clothed and curled,
With forest ruffling to the top;
I saw the river's length unfurled,
Pale silver down the fruited plain,
Grown great and stately with the rain.
Through miles of shadow and soft heat,
Where field and fallow, fence and tree,
Were all one world of greenery,
I heard the robin ringing sweet,
The sparrow piping silverly,
The thrushes at the forest's hem
And as I went I sang with them.

Archibald Lampman

Alcyone

In the silent depth of space,
Immeasurably old, immeasurably far,
Glittering with a silver flame
Through eternity,
Rolls a great and burning star,
With a noble name,
Alcyone!

In the glorious chart of heaven
It is marked the first of seven;
'Tis a Pleiad:
And a hundred years of earth
With their long-forgotten deeds have come and gone,
Since that tiny point of light,
Once a splendour fierce and bright,
Had its birth
In the star we gaze upon.

It has travelled all that time--
Thought has not a swifter flight--
Through a region where no faintest gust
Of life comes ever, but the power of night
Dwells stupendous and sublime,
Limitless and void and lonely,
A region mute with age, and peopled only
With the dead and ruined dust
Of worlds that lived eternities ago.

Man! when thou dost think of this,
And what our earth and its existence is,
The half-blind toils since life began,
The little aims, the little span,
With what passion and what pride,
And what hunger fierce and wide,
Thou dost break beyond it all,
Seeking for the spirit unconfined
In the clear abyss of mind
A shelter and a peace majestic.
For what is life to thee,
Turning toward the primal light,
With that stern and silent face,
If thou canst not be
Something radiant and august as night,
Something wide as space?

Therefore with a love and gratitude divine
Thou shalt cherish in thine heart for sign
A vision of the great and burning star,
Immeasurably old, immeasurably far,
Surging forth its silver flame
Through eternity;
And thine inner heart shall ring and cry

With the music strange and high,
The grandeur of its name
Alcyone!

Archibald Lampman

Among The Millet

The dew is gleaming in the grass,
The morning hours are seven,
And I am fain to watch you pass,
Ye soft white clouds of heaven.

Ye stray and gather, part and fold;
The wind alone can tame you;
I think of what in time of old
The poets loved to name you.

They called you sheep, the sky your sward,
A field without a reaper;
They called the shining sun your lord,
The shepherd wind your keeper.

Your sweetest poets I will deem
The men of old for moulding
In simple beauty such a dream,
And I could lie beholding,

Where daisies in the meadow toss,
The wind from morn till even,
Forever shepherd you across
The shining field of heaven.

Archibald Lampman

Among The Orchards

Already in the dew-wrapped vineyards dry
Dense weights of heat press down. The large bright drops
Shrink in the leaves. From dark acacia tops
The nuthatch flings his short reiterate cry;
And ever as the sun mounts hot and high
Thin voices crowd the grass. In soft long strokes
The wind goes murmuring through the mountain oaks.
Faint wefts creep out along the blue and die.
I hear far in among the motionless trees--
Shadows that sleep upon the shaven sod--
The thud of dropping apples. Reach on reach
Stretch plots of perfumed orchard, where the bees
Murmur among the full-fringed golden-rod,
Or cling half-drunken to the rotting peach.

Archibald Lampman

Among The Timothy

Long hours ago, while yet the morn was blithe,
Nor sharp athirst had drunk the beaded dew,
A reaper came, and swung his cradled scythe
Around this stump, and, shearing slowly, drew
Far round among the clover, ripe for hay,
A circle clean and grey;
And here among the scented swathes that gleam,
Mixed with dead daisies, it is sweet to lie
And watch the grass and the few-clouded sky,
Nor think but only dream.

For when the noon was turning, and the heat
Fell down most heavily on field and wood,
I too came hither, borne on restless feet,
Seeking some comfort for an echoing mood.
Ah, I was weary of the drifting hours,
The echoing city towers,
The blind grey streets, the jingle of the throng,
Weary of hope that like a shape of stone,
Sat near at hand without a smile or moan,
And weary most of song.

And those high moods of mine that someone made
My heart a heaven, opening like a flower,
A sweeter world where I in wonder strayed,
Begirt with shapes of beauty and the power
Of dreams that moved through that enchanted clime
With changing breaths of rhyme,
Were all gone lifeless now like those white leaves.
That hang all winter, shivering dead and blind
Among the sinewy beeches in the wind,
That vainly calls and grieves.

Ah! I will set no more mine overtasked brain
To barren search and toil that beareth nought,
Forever following with sorefooted pain
The crossing pathways of unbourned thought;
But let it go, as one that hath no skill,
To take what shape it will,
An ant slow-burrowing in the earthy gloom,
A spider bathing in the dew at morn,
Or a brown bee in wayward fancy borne
From hidden bloom to bloom.

Hither and thither o'er the rocking grass
The little breezes, blithe as they are blind,
Teasing the slender blossoms pass and pass,
Soft-footed children of the gipsy wind,
To taste of every purple-fringed head
Before the bloom is dead;
And scarcely heed the daisies that, endowed
With stems so short they cannot see, up-bear

Their innocent sweet eyes distressed, and stare
Like children in a crowd.

Not far to fieldward in the central heat,
Shadowing the clover, a pale poplar stands
With glimmering leaves that, when the wind comes, beat
Together like innumerable small hands,
And with the calm, as in vague dreams astray,
Hang wan and silver-grey;
Like sleepy maenads, who in pale surprise,
Half-wakened by a prowling beast, have crept
Out of the hidden covert, where they slept,
At noon with languid eyes.

The crickets creak, and through the noonday glow,
That crazy fiddler of the hot mid-year,
The dry cicada plies his wiry bow
In long-spun cadence, thin and dusty sere:
From the green grass the small grasshoppers' din
Spreads soft and silvery thin:
And ever and anon a murmur steals
Into mine ears of toil that moves away,
The crackling rustle of the pitch-forked hay
And lazy jerk of wheels.

As so I lie and feel the soft hours a wane,
To wind and sun and peaceful sound laid bare,
That aching dim discomfort of the brain
Fades off unseen, and shadowy-footed care
Into some hidden corner creeps at last
To slumber deep and fast;
And gliding on, quite fashioned to forget,
From dream to dream I bid my spirit pass
Out into the pale green ever-swaying grass
To brood, but no more fret.

And hour by hour among all shapes that grow
Of purple mints and daisies gemmed with gold
In sweet unrest my visions come and go;
I feel and hear and with quiet eyes behold;
And hour by hour, the ever-journeying sun,
In gold and shadow spun,
Into mine eyes and blood, and through the dim
Green glimmering forest of the grass shines down,
Till flower and blade, and every cranny brown,
And I are soaked with him.

Archibald Lampman

Amor Vitae

I love the warm bare earth and all
That works and dreams thereon:
I love the seasons yet to fall:
I love the ages gone,

The valleys with the sheeted grain,
The river's smiling might,
The merry wind, the rustling rain,
The vastness of the night.

I love the morning's flame, the steep
Where down the vapour clings:
I love the clouds that float and sleep,
And every bird that sings.

I love the purple shower that pours
On far-off fields at even:
I love the pine-wood dusk whose floors
Are like the courts of heaven.

I love the heaven's azure span,
The grass beneath my feet:
I love the face of every man
Whose thought is swift and sweet.

I let the wrangling world go by,
And like an idle breath
Its echoes and its phantoms fly:
I care no jot for death.

Time like a Titan bright and strong
Spreads one enchanted gleam:
Each hour is but a fluted song,
And life a lofty dream.

Archibald Lampman

An Athenian Reverie

How the returning days, one after one,
Came ever in their rhythmic round, unchanged,
Yet from each looped robe for every man
Some new thing falls. Happy is he
Who fronts them without fear, and like the gods
Looks out unanxiously on each day's gift
With calmly curious eye. How many things
Even in a little space, both good and ill,
Have fallen on me, and yet in all of them
The keen experience or the smooth remembrance
Hath found some sweet. It scarcely seems a month
Since we saw Crete; so swiftly sped the days,
Borne onward with how many changing scenes,
Filled with how many crowding memories.
Not soon shall I forget them, the stout ship,
All the tense labour with the windy sea,
The cloud-wrapped heights of Crete, beheld far off,
And white Cytaeon with its stormy pier,
The fruitful valleys, the wild mountain road,
And those long days of ever-vigilant toil,
Scarcely with sleepless craft and unmoved front
Escaping robbers, that quiet restful eve
At rich Gortyna, where we lay and watched
The dripping foliage, and the darkening fields,
And over all huge-browed above the night
Ida's great summit with its fiery crown;
And then once more the stormy treacherous sea,
The noisy ship, the seamen's vehement cries,
That battled with the whistling wind, the feet
Reeling upon the swaying deck, and eyes
Strained anxiously toward land; ah, with what joy
At last the busy pier at Nauplia,
Rest and firm shelter for our racking brains:
Most sweet of all, most dear to memory
That journey with Euktemon through the hills
By fair Cleonae and the lofty pass;
Then Corinth with its riotous jollity,
Remembered like a reeling dream; and here
Good Theron's wedding, and this festal day;
And I, chief helper in its various rites,
Not least, commissioned through these wakeful hours
To dream before the quiet thalamos,
Unsleeping, like some full-grown bearded Eros,
The guardian of love's sweetest mysteries.
To-morrow I shall hear again the din
Of the loosed cables, and the rowers' chaunt,
The rattled cordage and the plunging oars.
Once more the bending sail shall bear us on
Across the level of the laughing sea.
Ere mid-day we shall see far off behind us,
Faint as the summit of a sultry cloud,
The white Acropolis. Past Sunium

With rushing keel, the long Euboean strand,
Hymettus and the pine-dark hills shall fade
Into the dusk: at Andros we shall water,
And ere another starlight hush the shores
From seaward valleys catch upon the wind
The fragrance of old Chian vintages.
At Chios many things shall fall but none
Can trace the future; rather let me dream
Of what is now, and what hath been, for both
Are fraught with life.

Here the unbroken silence
Awakens thought and makes remembrance sweet.
How solidly the brilliant moonlight shines
Into the courts; beneath the colonnades
How dense the shadows. I can scarcely see
Yon painted Dian on the darkened wall;
Yet how the gloom hath made her real. What sound,
Piercing the leafy covert of her couch,
Hath startled her. Perchance some prowling wolf,
Or luckless footsteps of the stealthy Pan,
Creeping at night among noiseless steeps
And hollows of the Erymanthian woods,
Roused her from sleep. With listening head,
Snatched bow, and quiver lightly slung, she stands,
And peers across that dim and motionless glade,
Beckoning about her heels the wakeful dogs;
Yet Dian, thus alert, is but a dream,
Making more real this brooding quietness.
How strong and wonderful is night! Mankind
Has yielded all to one sweet helplessness:
Thought, labour, strife and all activities
Have ebbed like fever. The smooth tide of sleep,
Rolling across the fields of Attica,
Hath covered all the labouring villages.
Even great Athens with her busy hands
And busier tongues lies quiet beneath its waves.
Only a steady murmur seems to come
Up from her silentness, as if the land
Were breathing heavily in dreams. Abroad
No creature stirs, not even the reveller,
Staggering, unlanterned, from the cool Piraeus,
With drunken shout. The remnants of the feast,
The crumpled cushions and the broken wreathes,
Lie scattered in yon shadowy court, whose stones
Through the warm hours drink up the staining wine.
The bridal oxen in their well-filled stalls
Sleep, mindless of the happy weight they drew.
The torch is charred; the garlands at the door,
So gay at morning with their bright festoons,
Hang limp and withered; and the joyous flutes
Are empty of all sound. Only my brain

Holds now in its remote unsleeping depths
The echo of the tender hymenaeos
And memory of the modest lips that sang it.
Within the silent thalamos the queen,
The sea-sprung radiant Cytherean reigns,
And with her smiling lips and fathomless eyes
Regards the lovers, knowing that this hour
Is theirs once only. Earth and thought and time
Lie far beyond them, a great gulf of joy,
Absorbing fear, regret and every grief,
A warm eternity: or now perchance
Night and the very weight of happiness,
Unsought, have turned upon their tremulous eyes
The mindless stream of sleep; nor do they care
If dawn should never come.

How joyously
These hours have gone with all their pictured scenes,
A string of golden beads for memory
To finger over in her moods, or stay
The hunger of some wakeful hour like this,
The flowers, the myrtles, the gay bridal train,
The flutes and pensive voices, the white robes,
The shower of sweet-meats, and the jovial feast,
The bride cakes, and the teeming merriment,
Most beautiful of all, most sweet to name,
The good Lysippe with her down-cast eyes,
Touched with soft fear, half scared at all the noise,
Whose tears were ready as her laughter, fresh,
And modest as some pink anemone.
How young she looked, and how her smiling lips
Betrayed her happiness. Ah, who can tell,
How often, when no watchful eye was near,
Her eager fingers, trembling and ashamed,
Essayed the apple-pips, or strewed the floor
With broken poppy petals. Next to her,
Theron himself the gladest goodliest figure,
His honest face ruddy with health and joy,
And smiling like the AEGean, when the sun
Hangs high in heaven, and the freshening wind
Comes in from Melos, rippling all its floor:
And there was Manto too, the good old crone,
So dear to children with her store of tales,
Warmed with new life: how to her old grey face
And withered limbs the very dance of youth
Seemed to return, and in her aged eyes
The waning fire rekindled: little Maeon,
That mischievous satyr with his tipsy wreath,
Who kept us laughing at his pranks, and made
Old Phyrrho angry. Him too sleep hath bound
Upon his rough-hewn couch with subtle thong,
Crowding his brain with odd fantastic shapes.

Even in sleep his little limbs, I think,
Twitch restlessly, and still his tongue gibes on
With inarticulate murmur. Ah, quaint Maeon!
And Manto, poor old Manto, what dim dreams
Of darkly-moving chaos and slow shapes
Of things that creep encumbered with huge burdens
Gloom and infest her through these dragging hours,
Haunting the wavering soul, so near the grave?
But all things journey to the same quiet end
At last, life, joy and every form of motion.
Nothing stands still. Not least inevitable,
The sad recession of this passionate love,
Whose panting fires, so soon and with such grief,
Burn down to ash.

Ai! Ai! 'tis a strange madness
To give up thought, ambition, liberty,
And all the rooted custom of our days,
Even life itself for one all pampering dream,
That withers like those garlands at the door;
And yet I have seen many excellent men
Besotted thus, and some that bore till death,
In the crook'd vision and embittered tongue,
The effect of this strange poison, like a scar,
An ineradicable hurt; but Fate,
Who deals more wondrously in this disease
Even than in others, yet doth sometimes will
To make the same thing unto different men
Evil or good. Was not Demetrios happy,
Who wore his fetters with such grace, and spent
On Chione, the Naxian, that shrewd girl,
His fortune and his youth, yet, while she lived,
Enjoyed the rich reward? He seemed like one,
That trod on wind, and I remember well,
How when she died in that remorseless plague,
And I alone stood with him at the pyre,
He shook me with his helpless passionate grief.
And honest Agathon, the married man,
Whose boyish fondness for his pretty wife
We smiled at, and yet envied; at the close
Of each day's labour how he posted home,
And thence no bait, however plumed, could draw him.
We laughed, but envied him. How sweet she looked
That morning at the Dyonisia,
With her rare eyes and modest girlish grace,
Leading her two small children by the palm.
I too might marry, if the faithful gods
Would promise me such joy as Agathon's.
Perhaps some day-but no, I am not one
To clip my wings, and wind about my feet
A net, whose self-made meshes are as stern
As they are soft. To me is ever present

The outer world with its untravelled paths,
The wanderer's dream, the itch to see new things.
A single tie could never bind me fast,
For life, this joyous, busy, ever-changing life,
Is only dear to me with liberty,
With space of earth for feet to travel in
And space of mind for thought.

Not so for all;
To most men life is but a common thing,
The hours a sort of coin to barter with,
Whose worth is reckoned by the sum they buy
In gold, or power, or pleasure; each short day
That brings not these deemed fruitless as dry sand.
Their lives are but a blind activity,
And death to them is but the end of motion,
Grey children who have madly eat and drunk,
Won the high seats or filled their chests with gold.
And yet for all their years have never seen
The picture of their lives, or how life looks
To him who hath the deep uneager eye,
How sweet and large and beautiful it was,
How strange the part they played. Like him who sits
Beneath some mighty tree, with half-closed eyes,
At ease rejoicing in its murmurous shade,
Yet never once awakes from his dull dream
To mark with curious joy the kingly trunk,
The sweeping boughs and tower of leaves that gave it,
Even so the most of men; they take the gift,
And care not for the giver. Strange indeed
Are they, and pitiable beyond measure,
Who, thus unmindful of their wretchedness,
Crowd at life's bountiful gates, like fattening beggars;
Greedy and blind. For see how rich a thing
Life is to him who sees, to whom each hour
Brings some fresh wonder to be brooded on,
Adds some new group or studied history
To that wrought sculpture, that our watchful dreams
Cast up upon the broad expanse of time,
As in a never-finished frieze, not less
The little things that most men pass unmarked
Than those that shake mankind. Happy is he,
Who, as a watcher, stands apart from life,
From all life and his own, and thus from all,
Each thought, each deed, and each hour's brief event,
Draws the full beauty, sucks its meaning dry.
For him this life shall be a tranquil joy.
He shall be quiet and free. To him shall come
No gnawing hunger for the coarser touch,
No mad ambition with its fateful grasp;
Sorrow itself shall sway him like a dream.

How full life is; how many memories
Flash, and shine out, when thought is sharply stirred;
How the mind works, when once the wheels are loosed,
How nimbly, with what swift activity.
I think, 'tis strange that men should ever sleep,
There are so many things to think upon,
So many deeds, so many thoughts to weigh,
To pierce and plumb them to the silent depth.
Yet in that thought I do rebuke myself,
Too little given to probe the inner heart,
But rather wont, with the luxurious eye,
To catch from life its outer loveliness,
Such things as do but store the joyous memory
With food for solace rather than for thought,
Like light-lined figures on a painted jar.
I wonder where Euktemon is to-night,
Euktemon with his rough and fitful talk,
His moody gesture and defiant stride;
How strange, how bleak and unapproachable;
And yet I liked him from the first. How soon
We know our friends, through all disguise of mood,
Discerning by a subtle touch of spirit
The honest heart within. Euktemon's glance
Betrayed him with its gusty friendliness,
Flashing at moments from the clouded brow,
Like brave warm sunshine, and his laughter too,
So rare, so sudden, so contagious,
How at some merry scene, some well-told tale,
Or swift invention of the winged wit,
It broke like thunderous water, rolling out
In shaken peals on the delighted ear.
Yet no man would have dreamed, who saw us two
That first grey morning on the pier at Crete,
That friendship could have forged thus easily
A bond so subtle and so sure between us;
He, gloomy and austere; I, full of thought
As he, yet in adverse mood, at ease,
Lifting with lighter hands the lids of life,
Untortured by its riddles; he, whose smiles
Were rare and sudden as the autumn sun;
I, to whom smiles are ever near the lip
And yet I think he loved me too; my mood
Was not unpleasant to him, though I know
At times I teased him with flickering talk.
How self-immured he was; for all our converse
I gathered little, little, of his life,
A bitter trial to me, who love to learn
The changes of men's outer circumstance,
The strokes that fate has shaped them with, and so,
Fitting to these their present speech and favour,
Discern the thought within. From him I gleaned
Nothing. At least the word, however guarded,

That sought to try the fastenings of his life
With prying hands, how mute and dark he grew,
And like the cautious tortoise at a touch
Drew in beneath his shell.

But ah, how sweet
The memory of that long untroubled day,
To me so joyous, and so free from care,
Spent as I love on foot, our first together,
When fate and the reluctant sea at last
Had given us safely to dry land; the tramp
From grey Mycenae by the pass to Corinth,
The smooth white road, the soft caressing air,
Full of the scent of blossoms, the clear sky,
Strewn lightly with the little tardy clouds,
Old Helios' scattered flock, the low-branched oaks
And fountained resting-places, the cool nooks,
Where eyes less darkened with life's use than mine
Perchance had caught the Naiads in their dreams,
Or won white glimpses of their flying heels.
How light our feet were: with what rhythmic strides
We left the long blue gulf behind us, sown
Far out with snowy sails; and how our hearts
Rose with the growth of morning, till we reached
That moss-hung fountain on the hillside near
Cleonae, where the dark anemones
Cover the ground, and make it red like fire.
Could ever grief, I wonder, or fixed care,
Or even the lingering twilight of old age,
Divest for me such memories of their sweet?
Even Euktemon's obdurate mood broke down.
The odorous stillness, the serene bright air,
The leafy shadows, the warm blossoming earth,
Drew near with their voluptuous eloquence,
And melted him. Ah, what a talk we had!
How eagerly our nimble tongues ran on,
With linked wit, in joyous sympathy.
Such hours, I think, are better than long years
Of brooding loneliness, mind touching mind
To leaping life, and thought sustaining thought,
Till even the darkest chambers of grey time,
His ancient seats, and bolted mysteries,
Open their hoary doors, and at a look
Lay all their treasures bare. How, when our thought
Wheeling on ever bolder wings at last
Grew as it seemed too large for utterance,
We both fell silent, striving to recall
And grasp such things as in our daring mood
We had but glimpsed and leaped at; yet how long
We studied thus with absent eyes, I know not;
Our thought died slowly out; the busy road,
The voices of the passers-by, the change

Of garb and feature, and the various tongues
Absorbed us. Ah, how clearly I recall them!
For in these silent wakeful hours the mind
Is strangely swift. With that sharp lines
The shapes of things that even years have buried
Shine out upon the rapid memory,
Moving and warm like life. I can see now
The form of that tall peddler, whose strange wares,
Outlandish dialect and impudent gait
Awoke Euktemon's laughter. In mine ear
Is echoing still the cracking string of gibes,
They flung at one another. I remember too
The grey-haired merchant with his bold black eyes
And brace of slaves, the old ship captain tanned
With sweeping sea-winds and the pitiless sun,
But best of all that dainty amorous pair,
Whose youthful spirit neither heat nor toil
Could conquer. What a charming group they made?
The creaking litter and the long brown poles,
The sinewy bearers with their cat-like stride,
Dripping with sweat, that merry dark-eyed girl,
Whose sudden beauty shook us from our dreams,
And chained our eyes. How beautiful she was?
Half-hid among the gay Miletian cushions,
The lovely laughing face, the gracious form,
The fragrant lightly-knotted hair, and eyes
Full of the dancing fire of wanton Corinth.
That happy stripling, whose delighted feet
Swung at her side, whose tongue ran on so gaily,
Is it for him alone she wreathes those smiles,
And tunes so musically that flexile voice,
Soft as the Lydian flute? Surely his gait
Proclaimed the lover, and his well-filled girdle
Not less the lover's strength. How joyously
He strode, unmindful of his ruffled curls,
Whose perfumes still went wide upon the wind,
His dust-stained robe unheeded, and the stones
Whose ragged edges frayed his delicate shoes.
How radiant, how full of hope he was!
What pleasant memories, how many things
Rose up again before me, as I lay
Half stretched among the crushed anemones,
And watched them, till a far off jutting ledge
Precluded sight, still listening till mine ears
Caught the last vanishing murmur of their talk.

Only a little longer; then we rose
With limbs refreshed, and kept a swinging pace
Toward Corinth; but our talk, I know not why,
Fell for that day. I wonder what there was
About those dainty lovers or their speech,
That changed Euktemon's mood; for all the way

From high Cleonae to the city gates,
Till sunset found us loitering without aim,
Half lost among the dusky-moving crowds,
I could get nothing from him but dark looks,
Short answers and the old defiant stride.
Some memory pricked him. It may be, perchance,
A woman's treachery, some luckless passion,
In former days endured, hath seared his blood,
And dowered him with that cureless bitter humour.
To him solitude and the wanderer's life
Alone are sweet, the tumults of this world
A thing unworthy of the wise man's touch,
Its joys and sorrows to be met alike
With broad-browed scorn. One quality at least
We have in common; we are idlers both,
Shifters and wanderers through this sleepless world,
Albeit in different moods. 'Tis that, I think,
That knit us, and the universal need
For near companionship. Howe'er it be,
There is no hand that I would gladlier grasp,
Either on earth or in the nether gloom,
When the grey keel shall grind the Stygian strand,
Than stern Euktemon's.

Archibald Lampman

An Autumn Landscape

No wind there is that either pipes or moans;
The fields are cold and still; the sky
Is covered with a blue-gray sheet
Of motionless cloud; and at my feet
The river, curling softly by,
Whispers and dimples round its quiet gray stones.

Along the chill green slope that dips and heaves
The road runs rough and silent, lined
With plum-trees, misty and blue-gray,
And poplars pallid as the day,
In masses spectral, undefined,
Pale greenish stems half hid in dry gray leaves.

And on beside the river's sober edge
A long fresh field lies black. Beyond,
Low thickets gray and reddish stand,
Stroked white with birch; and near at hand,
Over a little steel-smooth pond,
Hang multitudes of thin and withering sedge.

Across a waste and solitary rise
A ploughman urges his dull team,
A stooped gray figure with prone brow
That plunges bending to the plough
With strong, uneven steps. The stream
Rings and re-echoes with his furious cries.

Sometimes the lowing of a cow, long-drawn,
Comes from far off; and crows in strings
Pass on the upper silences.
A flock of small gray goldfinches,
Flown down with silvery twitterings,
Rustle among the birch-cones and are gone.

This day the season seems like one that heeds,
With fixed ear and lifted hand,
All moods that yet are known on earth,
All motions that have faintest birth,
If haply she may understand
The utmost inward sense of all her deeds.

Archibald Lampman

An Impression

I heard the city time-bells call
Far off in hollow towers,
And one by one with measured fall
Count out the old dead hours;

I felt the march, the silent press
Of time, and held my breath;
I saw the haggard dreadfulness
Of dim old age and death.

Archibald Lampman

An October Sunset

One moment, the slim cloudflakes seem to lean
With their sad sunward faces aureoled,
And longing lips set downward brightening
To take the last sweet hand kiss of the king,
Gone down beyond the closing west acold;
Paying no reverence to the slender queen,
That like a curved olive leaf of gold
Hangs low in heaven, rounded toward sun,
Or the small stars that one by one unfold
Down the gray border of the night begun.

Archibald Lampman

An Ode To The Hills

AEons ago ye were,
Before the struggling changeful race of man
Wrought into being, ere the tragic stir
Of human toil and deep desire began:
So shall ye still remain,
Lords of an elder and immutable race,
When many a broad metropolis of the plain,
Or thronging port by some renowned shore,
Is sunk in nameless ruin, and its place
Recalled no more.

Empires have come and gone,
And glorious cities fallen in their prime;
Divine, far-echoing, names once writ in stone
Have vanished in the dust and void of time;
But ye, firm-set, secure,
Like Treasure in the hardness of God's palm,
Are yet the same for ever; ye endure
By virtue of an old slow-ripening word,
In your grey majesty and sovereign calm,
Untouched, unstirred.

Tempest and thunderstroke,
With whirlwinds dipped in midnight at the core,
Have torn strange furrows through your forest cloak,
And made your hollow gorges clash and roar,
And scarred your brows in vain.
Around your barren heads and granite steeps
Tempestuous grey battalions of the rain
Charge and recharge, across the plateaued floors,
Drenching the serried pines; and the hail sweeps
Your pitiless scaurs.

The long midsummer heat
Chars the thin leafage of your rocks in fire:
Autumn with windy robe and ruinous feet
On your wide forests wreaks his fell desire,
Heaping in barbarous wreck
The treasure of your sweet and prosperous days;
And lastly the grim tyrant, at whose beck
Channels are turned to stone and tempests wheel,
On brow and breast and shining shoulder lays
His hand of steel.

And yet not harsh alone,
Nor wild, nor bitter are your destinies,
O fair and sweet, for all your heart of stone,
Who gather beauty round your Titan knees,
As the lens gathers light.
The dawn gleams rosy on your splendid brows,
The sun at noonday folds you in his might,
And swathes your forehead at his going down,

Last leaving, where he first in pride bestows,
His golden crown.

In unregarded glooms,
Where hardly shall a human footstep pass,
Myriads of ferns and soft maianthemums,
Or lily-breathing slender pyrolas
Distil their hearts for you.
Far in your pine-clad fastnesses ye keep
Coverts the lonely thrush shall wander through,
With echoes that seem ever to recede,
Touching from pine to pine, from steep to steep,
His ghostly reed.

The fierce things of the wild
Find food and shelter in your tenantless rocks,
The eagle on whose wings the dawn hath smiled,
The loon, the wild-cat, and the bright-eyed fox;
For far away indeed
Are all the ominous noises of mankind,
The slaughterer's malice and the trader's greed:
Your rugged haunts endure no slavery:
No treacherous hand is there to crush or bind,
But all are free.

Therefore out of the stir
Of cities and the ever-thickening press
The poet and the worn philosopher
To your bare peaks and radiant loneliness
Escape, and breathe once more
The wind of the Eternal: that clear mood,
Which Nature and the elder ages bore,
Lends them new courage and a second prime,
At rest upon the cool infinitude
Of Space and Time.

The mists of troublous days,
The horror of fierce hands and fraudulent lips,
The blindness gathered in Life's aimless ways
Fade from them, and the kind Earth-spirit strips
The bandage from their eyes,
Touches their hearts and bids them feel and see;
Beauty and Knowledge with that rare apprise
Pour over them from some divine abode,
Falling as in a flood of memory,
The bliss of God.

I too perchance some day,
When Love and Life have fallen far apart,
Shall slip the yoke and seek your upward way
And make my dwelling in your changeless heart;
And there in some quiet glade,

Some virgin plot of turf, some innermost dell,
Pure with cool water and inviolate shade,
I'll build a blameless altar to the dear
And kindly gods who guard your haunts so well
From hurt or fear.

There I will dream day-long,
And honour them in many sacred ways,
With hushed melody and uttered song,
And golden meditation and with praise.
I'll touch them with a prayer,
To clothe my spirit as your might is clad
With all things bountiful, divine, and fair,
Yet inwardly to make me hard and true,
Wide-seeing, passionless, immutably glad,
And strong like you.

Archibald Lampman

An Old Lesson From The Fields

Even as I watched the daylight how it sped
From noon till eve, and saw the light wind pass
In long pale waves across the flashing grass,
And heard through all my dreams, wherever led,
The thin cicada singing overhead,
I felt what joyance all this nature has,
And saw myself made clear as in a glass,
How that my soul was for the most part dead.

Oh, light, I cried, and, heaven, with all your blue,
Oh, earth, with all your sunny fruitfulness,
And ye, tall lillies, of the wind-vexed field,
What power and beauty life indeed might yield,
Could we but cast away its conscious stress,
Simple of heart, becoming even as you.

Archibald Lampman

April

Pale season, watcher in unvexed suspense,
Still priestess of the patient middle day,
Betwixt wild March's humored petulance
And the warm wooing of green kirtled May,
Maid month of sunny peace and sober grey,
Weaver of flowers in sunward glades that ring
With murmur of libation to the spring:

As memory of pain, all past, is peace,
And joy, dream-tasted, hath the deepest cheer,
So art thou sweetest of all months that lease
The twelve short spaces of the flying year.
The bloomless days are dead, and frozen fear
No more for many moons shall vex the earth,
Dreaming of summer and fruit laden mirth.

The grey song-sparrows full of spring have sung
Their clear thin silvery tunes in leafless trees;
The robin hops, and whistles, and among
The silver-tasseled poplars the brown bees
Murmur faint dreams of summer harvestries:
The creamy sun at even scatters down
A gold-green mist across the murmuring town.

By the slow streams the frogs all day and night
Dream without thought of pain or heed of ill,
Watching the long warm silent hours take flight,
And ever with soft throats that pulse and thrill,
From the pale-weeded shallows trill and trill,
Tremulous sweet voices, flute-like, answering
One to another glorying in the spring.

All day across the ever-cloven soil,
Strong horses labour, steaming in the sun,
Down the long furrows with slow straining toil,
Turning the brown of clean layers; and one by one
The crows gloom over them till daylight done
Finds them asleep somewhere in dusked lines
Beyond the wheatlands in the northern pines.

The old year's cloaking of brown leaves, that bind
The forest floor-ways, plated close and true-
The last love's labour of the autumn wind-
Is broken with curled flower buds white and blue
In all the matted hollows and speared through
With thousand serpent-spotted blades up-sprung,
Yet bloomless, of the slender adder-tongue.

In the warm noon the south wind creeps and cools,
Where the red-budded stems of maples throw
Still tangled etchings on the amber pools,
Quite silent now, forgetful of the slow

Drip of the taps, the troughs, and trampled snow,
The keen March mornings, and the silvering rime
And mirthful labour of the sugar prime.

Ah, I have wandered with unwearied feet,
All the long sweetness of an April day,
Lulled with cool murmurs and the drowsy beat
Of partridge wings in secret thickets grey,
The marriage hymns of all the birds at play,
The faces of sweet flowers, and easeful dreams
Beside slow reaches of frog-haunted streams;

Wandered with happy feet, and quite forgot
The shallow toil, the strife against the grain,
Near souls, that hear us call, but answer not,
The loneliness, perplexity and pain,
And high thoughts cankered with an earthly stain
And then the long draught emptied to the lees,
I turn me homeward in slow pacing ease,

Cleaving the cedar shadows and the thin
Mist of grey gnats that cloud the river shore,
Sweet even choruses, that dance and spin
Soft tangles in the sunset; and once more
The city smites me with its dissonant roar.
To its hot heart I pass, untroubled yet,
Fed with calm hope, without desire or fret.

So to the year's first alter step I bring
Gifts of meek song, and make my spirit free
With the blind working if unanxious spring,
Careless with her, whether the days that flee
Pale drouth or golden-fruited plenty see,
So that we toil, brothers, without distress,
In calm-eyed peace and god-like blamelessness.

Archibald Lampman

April in the Hills

To-day the world is wide and fair
With sunny fields of lucid air,
And waters dancing everywhere;
The snow is almost gone;
The noon is builded high with light,
And over heaven's liquid height,
In steady fleets serene and white,
The happy clouds go on.

The channels run, the bare earth steams,
And every hollow rings and gleams
With jetting falls and dashing streams;
The rivers burst and fill;
The fields are full of little lakes,
And when the romping wind awakes
The water ruffles blue and shakes,
And the pines roar on the hill.

The crows go by, a noisy throng;
About the meadows all day long,
The shore-lark drops his brittle song;
And up the leafless tree
The nut-hatch runs, and nods, and clings;
The bluebird dips with flashing wings,
The robin flutes, the sparrow sings,
And the swallows float and flee.

I break the spirit's cloudy bands,
A wanderer in enchanted lands,
I feel the sun upon my hands;
And far from care and strife
The broad earth bids me forth. I rise
With lifted brow and upward eyes.
I bathe my spirit in blue skies,
And taste the springs of life.

I feel the tumult of new birth;
I waken with the wakening earth;
I match the bluebird in her mirth;
And wild with wind and sun,
A treasurer of immortal days,
I roam the glorious world with praise,
The hillsides and the woodland ways,
Till earth and I are one.

Archibald Lampman

April Night

How deep the April night is in its noon,
The hopeful, solemn, many-murmured night!
The earth lies hushed with expectation; bright
Above the world's dark border burns the moon,
Yellow and large; from forest floorways, strewn
With flowers, and fields that tingle with new birth,
The moist smell of the unimprisoned earth
Come up, a sigh, a haunting promise. Soon,

Ah, soon, the teeming triumph! At my feet
The river with its stately sweep and wheel
Moves on slow-motioned, luminous, gray like steel.
From fields far off whose watery hollows gleam,
Aye with blown throats that make the long hours sweet,
The sleepless toads are murmuring in their dreams.

Archibald Lampman

Aspiration

Oh deep-eyed brothers was there ever here,
Or is there now, or shall there sometime be
Harbour or any rest for such as we,
Lone thin-cheeked mariners, that aye must steer
Our whispering barks with such keen hope and fear
Toward misty bournes across the coastless sea,
Whose winds are songs that ever gust and flee,
Whose shores are dreams that tower but come not near.

Yet we perchance, for all that flesh and mind
Of many ills be marked with many a trace,
Shall find this life more sweet more strangely kind,
Than they of that dim-hearted earthly race,
Who creep firm-nailed upon the earth's hard face,
And hear nor see not, being deaf and blind.

Archibald Lampman

At The Ferry

On such a day the shrunken stream
Spends its last water and runs dry;
Clouds like far turrets in a dream
Stand baseless in the burning sky.
On such a day at every rod
The toilers in the hay-field halt,
With dripping brows, and the parched sod
Yields to the crushing foot like salt.

But here a little wind astir,
Seen waterward in jetting lines,
From yonder hillside topped with fir
Comes pungent with the breath of pines;
And here when all the noon hangs still,
White-hot upon the city tiles,
A perfume and a wintry chill
Breathe from the yellow lumber-piles.

And all day long there falls a blur
Of noises upon listless ears,
The rumble of the trams, the stir
Of barges at the clacking piers;
The champ of wheels, the crash of steam,
And ever, without change or stay,
The drone, as through a troubled dream,
Of waters falling far away.

A tug-boat up the farther shore
Half pants, half whistles, in her draught;
The cadence of a creaking oar
Falls drowsily; a corded raft
Creeps slowly in the noonday gleam,
And wheresoe'er a shadow sleeps
The men lie by, or half a-dream,
Stand leaning at the idle sweeps.

And all day long in the quiet bay
The eddying amber depths retard,
And hold, as in a ring, at play,
The heavy saw-logs notched and scarred;
And yonder between cape and shoal,
Where the long currents swing and shift,
An aged punt-man with his pole
Is searching in the parted drift.

At moments from the distant glare
The murmur of a railway steals
Round yonder jutting point the air
Is beaten with the puff of wheels;
And here at hand an open mill,
Strong clamor at perpetual drive,
With changing chant, now hoarse, now shrill,

Keeps dinning like a mighty hive.

A furnace over field and mead,
The rounding noon hangs hard and white;
Into the gathering heats recede
The hollows of the Chelsea height;
But under all to one quiet tune,
A spirit in cool depths withdrawn,
With logs, and dust, and wrack bestrewn,
The stately river journeys on.

I watch the swinging currents go
Far down to where, enclosed and piled,
The logs crowd, and the Gatineau
Comes rushing from the northern wild.
I see the long low point, where close
The shore-lines, and the waters end,
I watch the barges pass in rows
That vanish at the tapering bend.

I see as at the noon's pale core-
A shadow that lifts clear and floats-
The cabin'd village round the shore,
The landing and the fringe of boats;
Faint films of smoke that curl and wreath,
And upward with the like desire
The vast gray church that seems to breathe
In heaven with its dreaming spire.

And there the last blue boundaries rise,
That guard within their compass furled
This plot of earth: beyond them lies
The mystery of the echoing world;
And still my thought goes on, and yields
New vision and new joy to me,
Far peopled hills, and ancient fields,
And cities by the crested sea.

I see no more the barges pass,
Nor mark the ripple round the pier,
And all the uproar, mass on mass,
Falls dead upon a vacant ear.
Beyond the tumult of the mills,
And all the city's sound and strife,
Beyond the waste, beyond the hills,
I look far out and dream of life.

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

Autumn Maples

The thoughts of all the maples who shall name,
When the sad landscape turns to cold and grey?
Yet some for very ruth and sheer dismay,
Hearing the northwind pipe the winter's name,
Have fired the hills with beaconing clouds of flame;
And some with softer woe that day by day,
So sweet and brief, should go the westward way,
Have yearned upon the sunset with such shame,
That all their cheeks have turned to tremulous rose;
Others for wrath have turned a rusty red,
And some that knew not either grief or dread,
Ere the old year should find its iron close,
Have gathered down the sun's last smiles acold,
Deep, deep, into their luminous hearts of gold.

Archibald Lampman

Ballade of Summer's Sleep

Sweet summer is gone; they have laid her away-
The last sad hours that were touched with her grace-
In the hush where the ghosts of the dead flowers play;
The sleep that is sweet of her slumbering space
Let not a sight or a sound erase
Of the woe that hath fallen on all the lands:
Gather, ye dreams, to her sunny face,
Shadow her head with your golden hands.

The woods that are golden and red for a day
Girdle the hills in a jewelled case,
Like a girl's strange mirth, ere the quick death slay
The beautiful life that he hath in chase.
Darker and darker the shadows pace
Out of the north to the southern sands,
Ushers bearing the winter's mace:
Keep them away with your woven hands.

The yellow light lies on the wide wastes gray,
More bitter and cold than the winds that race,
From the skirts of the autumn, tearing away,
This way and that way, the woodland lace.
In the autumn's cheek is a hectic trace;
Behind her the ghost of the winter stands;
Sweet summer will moan in her soft gray place:
Mantle her head with your glowing hands.

Envoi.

Till the slayer be slain and the spring displace
The might of his arms with her rose-crowned bands,
Let her heart not gather a dream that is base:
Shadow her head with your golden hands.

Archibald Lampman

Before Sleep

Now the creeping nets of sleep
Stretch about and gather nigh,
And the midnight dim and deep
Like a spirit passes by,
Trailing from her crystal dress
Dreams and silent frostiness.

Yet a moment, ere I be
Tangled in the snares of night,
All the dreamy heart of me
To my Lady takes its flight,
To her chamber where she lies,
Wrapt in midnight phantasies.

Over many a glinting street
And the snow capped roofs of men,
Towers that tremble with the beat
Of the midnight bells, and then,
Where my body may not be,
Stands my spirit holily.

Wake not, Lady, wake not soon:
Through the frosty windows fall
Broken glimmers of the moon
Dimly on the floor and wall;
Wake not, Lady, never care,
'Tis my spirit kneeling there.

Let him kneel a moment now,
For the minutes fly apace;
Let him see the sleeping brow,
And the sweetly rounded face:
He shall tell me soon aright
How my lady looks to-night.

How her tresses out and in
Fold in many a curly freak,
Round about the snowy chin
And the softly tinted cheek,
Where no sorrows now can weep,
And the dimples lie asleep.

How her eyelids meet and match,
Gathered in two dusky seams,
Each the little creamy thatch
Of an azure house of dreams,
Or two flowers that love the light
Folded softly up at night.

How her bosom, breathing low,
Stirs the wavy coverlet
With a motion soft and slow:

Oh, my Lady, wake not yet;
There without a thought of guile
Let my spirit dream a while.

Yet, my spirit back to me,
Hurry soon and have a care;
Love will turn to agony,
If you rashly linger there;
Bending low as spirits may,
Touch her lips and come away.

So, fond spirit, beauty-fed,
Turning when your wave is o'er,
Weave a cross above the bed
And a sleep-rune on the floor,
That no evil enter there,
Ugly shapes and dreams beware.

Then, ye looming nets of sleep,
Ye may have me all your own,
For the night is wearing deep
And the ice-winds whisk and moan;
Come with all your drowsy stress,
Dreams and silent frostiness.

Archibald Lampman

Between The Rapids

The point is turned; the twilight shadow fills
The wheeling stream, the soft receding shore,
And on our ears from deep among the hills
Breaks now the rapid's sudden quickening roar.
Ah yet the same, or have they changed their face,
The fair green fields, and can it still be seen,
The white log cottage near the mountain's base,
So bright and quiet, so home-like and serene?
Ah, well I question, for as five years go,
How many blessings fall, and how much woe.

Aye there they are, nor have they changed their cheer,
The fields, the hut, the leafy mountain brows;
Across the lonely dusk again I hear
The loitering bells, the lowing of the cows,
The bleat of many sheep, the stilly rush
Of the low whispering river, and through all,
Soft human tongues that break the deepening hush
With faint-heard song or desultory call:
Oh comrades hold; the longest reach is past;
The stream runs swift, and we are flying fast.

The shore, the fields, the cottage just the same,
But how with them whose memory makes them sweet?
Oh if I called them, hailing name by name,
Would the same lifts the same old shouts repeat?
Have the rough years, so big with death and ill,
Gone lightly by and left them smiling yet?
Wild black-eyed Jeanne whose tongue was never still,
Old wrinkled Picaud, Pierre and pale Lisette,
The homely hearts that never cared to range,
While life's wide fields were filled with rush and change.

And where is Jacques, and where is Verginie?
I cannot tell; the fields are all a blur.
The lowing cows whose shapes I scarcely see,
Oh do they wait and do they call for her?
And is she changed, or is her heart still clear
As wind or morning, light as river foam?
Or have life's changes borne her far from here,
And far from rest, and far from help and home?
Ah comrades, soft, and let us rest awhile,
For arms grow tired with paddling many a mile.

The woods grow wild, and from the rising shore
The cool wind creeps, the faint wood odours steal;
Like ghosts down the rivers blackening floor
The misty fumes begin to creep and reel.
Once more I leave you, wandering toward the night,
Sweet home, sweet heart, that would have held me in;
Whither I go I know not, and the light
Is faint before, and rest is hard to win.

Ah sweet ye were and near to heaven's gate;
But youth is blind and wisdom comes too late.

Blacker and loftier grow the woods, and hark!
The freshening roar! The chute is near us now,
And dim the canyon grows, and inky dark
The water whispering from the birchen prow.
One long last look, and many a sad adieu,
While eyes can see and heart can feel you yet,
I leave sweet home and sweeter hearts to you,
A prayer for Picaud, one for pale Lisette,
A kiss for Pierre, my little Jacques, and thee,
A sigh for Jeanne, a sob for Verginie.

Oh, does she still remember? Is the dream
Now dead, or has she found another mate?
So near, so dear; and ah, so swift the stream;
Even now perhaps it were not yet too late.
But oh, what matter; for before the night
Has reached its middle, we have far to go:
Bend to your paddles, comrades; see, the light
Ebbs off apace; we must not linger so.
Aye thus it is! Heaven gleams and then is gone
Once, twice, it smiles, and still we wander on.

Archibald Lampman

By An Autumn Stream

Now overhead,
Where the rivulet loiters and stops,
The bittersweet hangs from the tops
Of the alders and cherries
Its bunches of beautiful berries,
Orange and red.

And the snowbirds flee,
Tossing up on the far brown field,
Now flashing and now concealed,
Like fringes of spray
That vanish and gleam on the gray
Field of the sea.

Flickering light,
Come the last of the leaves down borne,
And patches of pale white corn
In the wind complain,
Like the slow rustle of rain
Noticed by night.

Withered and thinned,
The sentinel mullein looms,
With the pale gray shadowy plumes
Of the goldenrod;
And the milkweed opens its pod,
Tempting the wind.

Aloft on the hill,
A cloudrift opens and shines
Through a break in its gorget of pines,
And it dreams at my feet
In a sad, silvery sheet,
Utterly still.

All things that be
Seem plunged into silence, distraught,
By some stern, some necessitous thought:
It wraps and enthralls
Marsh, meadow, and forest; and falls
Also on me.

Archibald Lampman

Chione

Scarcely a breath about the rocky stair
Moved, but the growing tide from verge to verge,
Heaving salt fragrance on the midnight air,
Climbed with a murmurous and fitful surge.
A hoary mist rose up and slowly sheathed
The dripping walls and portal granite-stepped,
And sank into the inner court, and crept
From column unto column thickly wreathed.

In that dead hour of darkness before dawn,
When hearts beat fainter, and the hands of death
Are strengthened,--with lips white and drawn
And feverish lids and scarcely moving breath,
The hapless mother, tender Chione,
Beside the earth-cold figure of her child,
After long bursts of weeping sharp and wild
Lay broken, silent in her agony.
At first in waking horror racked and bound
She lay, and then a gradual stupor grew
About her soul and wrapped her round and round
Like death, and then she sprang to life anew
Out of a darkness clammy as the tomb;
And, touched by memory or some spirit hand,
She seemed to keep a pathway down a land
Of monstrous shadow and Cimmerian gloom.

A waste of cloudy and perpetual night--
And yet there seemed a teeming presence there
Of life that gathered onward in thick flight,
Unseen, but multitudinous. Aware
Of something also on her path she was
That drew her heart forth with a tender cry.
She hurried with drooped ear and eager eye,
And called on the foul shapes to let her pass.

For down the sloping darkness far ahead
She saw a little figure slight and small,
With yearning arms and shadowy curls outspread,
Running at frightened speed; and it would fall
And rise, sobbing; and through the ghostly sleet
The cry came: 'Mother! Mother!' and she wist
The tender eyes were blinded by the mist,
And the rough stones were bruising the small feet.
And when she lifted a keen cry and clave
Forthright the gathering horror of the place,
Mad with her love and pity, a dark wave
Of clapping shadows swept about her face,
And beat her back, and when she gained her breath,
Athwart an awful vale a grizzled steam
Was rising from a mute and murky stream,
As cold and cavernous as the eye of death.

And near the ripple stood the little shade,
And many hovering ghosts drew near him, some
That seemed to peer out of the mist and fade
With eyes of soft and shadowing pity, dumb;
But others closed him round with eager sighs
And sweet insistence, striving to caress
And comfort him; but grieving none the less,
He reached her heartstrings with his tender cries.

And silently across the horrid flow,
The shapeless bark and pallid chalklike arms
Of him that oared it, dumbly to and fro,
Went gliding, and the struggling ghosts in swarms
Leaped in and passed, but myriads more behind
Crowded the dismal beaches. One might hear
A tumult of entreaty thin and clear
Rise like the whistle of a winter wind.

And still the little figure stood beside
The hideous stream, and toward the whispering prow
Held forth his tender tremulous hands, and cried,
Now to the awful ferryman, and now
To her that battled with the shades in vain.
Sometimes impending over all her sight
The spongy dark and the phantasmal flight
Of things half-shapen passed and hid the plain.

And sometimes in a gust a sort of wind
Drove by, and where its power was hurled,
She saw across the twilight, jarred and thinned,
Those gloomy meadows of the under world,
Where never sunlight was, nor grass, nor trees,
And the dim pathways from the Stygian shore,
Sombre and swart and barren, wandered o'er
By countless melancholy companies.

And farther still upon the utmost rim
Of the drear waste, whereto the roadways led,
She saw in piling outline, huge and dim,
The walled and towered dwellings of the dead
And the grim house of Hades. Then she broke
Once more fierce-footed through the noisome press;
But ere she reached the goal of her distress,
Her pierced heart seemed to shatter, and she woke.

It seemed as she had been entombed for years,
And came again to living with a start.
There was an awful echoing in her ears
And a great deadness pressing at her heart.
She shuddered and with terror seemed to freeze,
Lip-shrunken and wide-eyed a moment's space,
And then she touched the little lifeless face,

And kissed it, and rose up upon her knees.

And round her still the silence seemed to teem
With the foul shadows of her dream beguiled--
No dream, she thought; it could not be a dream,
But her child called for her; her child, her child!--
She clasped her quivering fingers white and spare,
And knelt low down, and bending her fair head
Unto the lower gods who rule the dead,
Touched them with tender homage and this prayer:

O gloomy masters of the dark demesne,
Hades, and thou whom the dread deity
Bore once from earthly Enna for his queen,
Beloved of Demeter, pale Persephone,
Grant me one boon;
'Tis not for life I pray,
Not life, but quiet death; and that soon, soon!
Loose from my soul this heavy weight of clay,
This net of useless woe.
O mournful mother, sad Persephone,
Be mindful, let me go!

How shall he journey to the dismal beach,
Or win the ear of Charon, without one
To keep him and stand by him, sure of speech?
He is so little, and has just begun
To use his feet
And speak a few small words,
And all his daily usage has been sweet
As the soft nesting ways of tender birds.
How shall he fare at all
Across that grim inhospitable land,
If I too be not by to hold his hand,
And help him if he fall?

And then before the gloomy judges set,
How shall he answer? Oh, I cannot bear
To see his tender cheeks with weeping wet,
Or hear the sobbing cry of his despair!
I could not rest,
Nor live with patient mind,
Though knowing what is fated must be best;
But surely thou art more than mortal kind,
And thou canst feel my woe,
All-pitying, all-observant, all-divine;
He is so little, mother Proserpine,
He needs me, let me go!

Thus far she prayed, and then she lost her way,
And left the half of all her heart unsaid,
And a great languor seized her, and she lay,

Soft fallen, by the little silent head.
Her numbed lips had passed beyond control,
Her mind could neither plan nor reason more,
She saw dark waters and an unknown shore,
And the grey shadows crept about her soul.

Again through darkness on an evil land
She seemed to enter but without distress.
A little spirit led her by the hand,
And her wide heart was warm with tenderness.
Her lips, still moving, conscious of one care,
Murmured a moment in soft mother-tones,
And so fell silent. From their sombre thrones
Already the grim gods had heard her prayer.

Archibald Lampman

Cloud-Break

With a turn of his magical rod,
That extended and suddenly shone,
From the round of his glory some god
Looks forth and is gone.

To the summit of heaven the clouds
Are rolling aloft like steam;
There's a break in their infinite shrouds,
And below it a gleam.
O'er the drift of the river a whiff
Comes out from the blossoming shore;
And the meadows are greening, as if
They never were green before.

The islands are kindled with gold
And russet and emerald dye;
And the interval waters outrolled
Are more blue than the sky.
From my feet to the heart of the hills
The spirits of May intervene,
And a vapor of azure distills
Like a breath on the opaline green.

Only a moment!-and then
The chill and the shadow decline,
On the eyes of rejuvenate men
That were wide and divine.

Archibald Lampman

Comfort

Comfort the sorrowful with watchful eyes
In silence, for the tongue cannot avail.
Vex not his wounds with rhetoric, nor the stale
Worn truths, that are but maddening mockeries
To him whose grief outmasters all replies.
Only watch near him gently; do but bring
The piteous help of silent ministering.
Watchful and tender. This alone is wise.

So shall thy presence and thine every motion,
The grateful knowledge of thy sad devotion
Melt out the passionate hardness of his grief,
And break the flood-gates of thy pent-up soul.
He shall bow down beneath thy mute control,
And take thine hands, and weep, and find relief.

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

Deeds

'Tis well with words, oh masters, ye have sought,
To turn men's eyes yearning to the great and true,
Yet first take heed to what your own hands do;
By deeds not words the souls of men are taught;
Good lives alone are fruitful; they are caught
Into the fountain of all life (wherethrough
Men's souls that drink are broken or made new)
Like drops of heavenly elixir, fraught
With the clear essence of eternal youth.
Even one little deed of weak untruth
Is like a drop of quenchless venom cast,
A liquid thread, into life's feeding stream,
Woven forever with its crystal gleam,
Bearing the seed of death and woe at last.

Archibald Lampman

Despondency

Slow figures in some live remorseless frieze,
The approaching days escapeless and unguessed,
With mask and shroud impenetrably dressed;
Time, whose inexorable destinies
Bear down upon us like impending seas;
And the huge presence of the world, at best
A sightless giant wandering without rest,
Aged and mad with many miseries.

The weight and measure of these things who knows?
Resting at times beside life's thought-swept stream,
Sobered and stunned with unexpected blows,
We scarcely hear the uproar; life doth seem,
Save for the certain nearness of its woes,
Vain and phantasmal as a sick man's dream.

Archibald Lampman

Distance

To the distance! Ah, the distance!
Blue and broad and dim!
Peace is not in burgh or meadow,
But beyond the rim.

Aye, beyond it, far beyond it;
Follow still my soul,
Till this earth is lost in heaven,
And thou feel'st the whole.

Archibald Lampman

Easter Eve

Hear me, Brother, gently met;
Just a little, turn, not yet,
Thou shalt laugh, and soon forget:
Now the midnight draweth near.
I have little more to tell;
Soon with hallow stroke and knell,
Thou shalt count the palace bell,
Calling that the hour is here.

Burdens black and strange to bear,
I must tell, and thou must share,
Listening with that stony stare,
Even as many a man before.
Years have lightly come and gone
In their jocund unison,
But the tides of life roll on-
They remember now no more.

Once upon a night of glee,
In an hour of revelry,
As I wandered restlessly,
I beheld with burning eye,
How a pale procession rolled
Through a quarter quaint and old,
With its banners and its gold,
And the crucifix went by.

Well I knew that body brave
That was pierced and hung to save,
But my flesh was now a grave
For the soul that gnashed within.
He that they were bearing by,
With their banners white and high,
He was pure, and foul was I,
And his whiteness mocked my sin.

Ah, meseemed that even he,
Would not wait to look on me,
In my years and misery,
Things that he alone could heal.
In mine eyes I felt the flame
Of a rage that naught could tame,
And I cried and cursed his name,
Till my brain began to reel.

In a moment I was 'ware,
How that many watching there,
Fearfully with blanch and stare,
Crossed themselves and shrank away;
Then upon my reeling mind,
Like a sharp blow from behind,
Fell the truth, and left me blind,

Hopeless now and all astray.

O'er the city wandering wide,
Seeking but some place to hide,
Where the sounds of mirth had died,
Through the shaken night I stole;
From the ever-eddy stream
Of the crowds that did but seem
Like the processions in a dream
To my empty echoing soul.

Till I came at last alone
To a hidden street of stone,
Where the city's monotone
On the silence fell no more.
Then I saw how one in white
With a footstep mute and light,
Through the shadow of the night
Like a spirit paced before.

And a sudden stillness came
Through my spirit and my frame,
And a spell without a name
Held me in his mystic track.
Though his presence seemed so mild,
Yet he led me like a child,
With a yearning strange and wild,
That I dared not turn me back.

Oh, I could not see his face,
Nor behold his utmost grace,
Yet I might not change my pace
Fastened by a strange belief;
For his steps were sad and slow,
And his hands hung straight below,
And his head was bowed, as though
Pressed by some immortal grief.

So I followed, yet not I
Held alone that company:
Every silent passer-by
Paled and turned and joined with me;
So we followed still and fleet,
While the city street by street,
Fell behind our rustling feet
Like a deadened memory.

Where the sound of sin and riot
Broke upon the night's dim quiet,
And the solemn bells hung nigh it
Echoed from their looming towers;
Where the mourners wept away,

Watching for the morning grey;
Where the weary toiler lay,
Husbanding the niggard hours;

By the gates where all night long
Guests in many a joyous throng,
With the sound of dance and song,
Dreamed in golden palaces;
Still he passed, and door by door
Opened with a pale outpour,
And the revel rose no more
Hushed in deeper phantasies.

As we passed, the talk and stir
Of the quiet wayfarer
And the noisy banqueter
Died upon the midnight dim.
They that reeled in drunken glee
Shrank upon the trembling knee,
And their jests died pallidly,
As they rose and followed him.

From the street and from the hall,
From the flare of festival
None that saw him stayed, but all
Followed where his wonder would:
And our feet at first so few
Gathered as those white feet drew
To a pallid multitude;

And the hushed and awful beat
Of our pale unnumbered feet
Made a murmur strange and sweet,
As we followed evermore.
Now the night was almost passed,
And the dawn was overcast,
When the stranger stayed at last
At a great cathedral door.

Never word the stranger said,
But he slowly raised his head,
And the vast door opened
By an unseen hand withdrawn;
And in silence wave on wave,
Like an army from the grave,
Up the aisles and up the nave,
All that spectral crowd rolled on.

As I followed close behind,
Knowledge like an awful wind
Seemed to blow my naked mind
Into darkness black and bare;

Yet with longing wild and dim,
And a terror vast and grim,
Nearer still I pressed to him,
Till I almost touched his hair.

From the gloom so strange and eery,
From the organ low and dreary,
Rose the wailing miserere,
By mysterious voices sung;
And a dim light shone, none knew,
How it came, or whence it grew,
From the dusky roof and through
All the solemn spaces flung.

But the stranger still passed on,
Till he reached the alter stone,
And with body white and prone
Sunk his forehead to the floor;
And I saw in my despair,
Standing like a spirit there,
How his head was bruised and bare,
And his hand were clenched before,

How his hair was fouled and knit
With the blood that clotted it,
Where the prickled thorns had bit
In his crowned agony;
In his hands so wan and blue,
Leaning out, I saw the two
Marks of where the nails pierced through,
Once on gloomy Calvary.

Then with trembling throat I owned
All my dark sin unatoned,
Telling it with lips that moaned,
And methought an echo came
From the bended crowd below,
Each one breathing faint and low,
Sins that none but he might know:
'Master I did curse thy name.'

And I saw him slowly rise
With his sad unearthly eyes,
Meeting mine with meek surprise,
And a voice came solemnly:
'Never more on mortal ground
For thy soul shall rest be found,
But when bells at midnight sound
Thou must rise and come with me.'

Then my forehead smote the floor,
Swooning, and I knew no more,

Till I heard the chancel door
Open for the choristers:
But the stranger's form was gone,
And the church was dim and lone:
Through the silence, one by one
Stole the early worshippers.

I an ageing now I know;
That was many years ago,
Yet or I shall rest below
In the grave where none intrude,
Night by night I roam the street,
And that awful form I meet,
And I follow pale and fleet,
With a ghostly multitude.

Every night I see his face,
With its sad and burdened grace,
And the torn and bloody trace,
That in hands and feet he has.
Once my life was dark and bad;
Now its days are strange and sad,
And the people call me mad:
See, they whisper as they pass.

Even now the echoes roll
From the swinging bells that toll;
It is midnight, now my soul
Hasten, for he glideth by.
Stranger, 'tis no phantasie:
Look! my master waits for me
Mutely, but thou canst not see
With the mortal blinded eye.

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

Favorites of Pan

Once, long ago, before the gods
Had left this earth, by stream and forest glade,
Where the first plough upturned the clinging sods,
Or the lost shepherd strayed,

Often to the tired listener's ear
There came at noonday or beneath the stars
A sound, he knew not whence, so sweet and clear,
That all his aches and scars

And every brooded bitterness,
Fallen asunder from his soul took flight,
Like mist or darkness yielding to the press
Of an unnamed delight,-

A sudden brightness of the heart,
A magic fire drawn down from Paradise,
That rent the cloud with golden gleam apart,-
And far before his eyes

The loveliness and calm of earth
Lay like a limitless dream remote and strange,
The joy, the strife, the triumph and the mirth,
And the enchanted change;

And so he followed the sweet sound,
Till faith had traversed her appointed span,
And murmured as he pressed the sacred ground:
'It is the note of Pan!'

Now though no more by marsh or stream
Or dewy forest sounds the secret reed-
For Pan is gone-Ah yet, the infinite dream
Still lives for them that heed.

In April, when the turning year
Regains its pensive youth, and a soft breath
And amorous influence over marsh and mere
Dissolves the grasp of death,

To them that are in love with life,
Wandering like children with untroubled eyes,
Far from the noise of cities and the strife,
Strange flute-like voices rise

At noon and in the quiet of the night
From every watery waste; and in that hour
The same strange spell, the same unnamed delight,
Enfolds them in its power.

An old-world joyousness supreme,
The warmth and glow of an immortal balm,

The mood-touch of the gods, the endless dream,
The high lethean calm.

They see, wide on the eternal way,
The services of earth, the life of man;
And, listening to the magic cry they say:
'It is the note of Pan!'

For, long ago, when the new strains
Of hostile hymns and conquering faiths grew keen,
And the old gods from their deserted fanes,
Fled silent and unseen,

So, too, the goat-foot Pan, not less
Sadly obedient to the mightier hand,
Cut him new reeds, and in a sore distress
Passed out from land to land;

And lingering by each haunt he knew,
Of fount or sinuous stream or grassy marge,
He set the syrinx to his lips, and blew
A note divinely large;

And all around him on the wet
Cool earth the frogs came up, and with a smile
He took them in his hairy hands, and set
His mouth to theirs awhile,

And blew into their velvet throats;
And ever from that hour the frogs repeat
The murmur of Pan's pipes, the notes,
And answers strange and sweet;

And they that hear them are renewed
By knowledge in some god-like touch conveyed,
Entering again into the eternal mood,
Wherein the world was made.

Archibald Lampman

Forest Moods

There is singing of birds in the deep wet woods,
In the heart of the listening solitudes,
Pewees, and thrushes, and sparrows, not few,
And all the notes of their throats are true.

The thrush from the innermost ash takes on
A tender dream of the treasured and gone;
But the sparrow singeth with pride and cheer
Of the might and light of the present and here.

There is shining of flowers in the deep wet woods,
In the heart of the sensitive solitudes,
The roseate bell and the lily are there,
And every leaf of their sheaf is fair.

Careless and bold, without dream of woe,
The trilliums scatter their flags of snow;
But the pale wood-daffodil covers her face,
Agloom with the doom of a sorrowful race.

Archibald Lampman

Freedom

Out of the heart of the city begotten
Of the labour of men and their manifold hands,
Whose souls, that were sprung from the earth in her morning,
No longer regard or remember her warning,
Whose hearts in the furnace of care have forgotten
Forever the scent and the hue of her lands;

Out of the heat of the usurer's hold,
From the horrible crash of the strong man's feet;
Out of the shadow where pity is dying;
Out of the clamour where beauty is lying,
Dead in the depth of the struggle for gold;
Out of the din and the glare of the street;

Into the arms of our mother we come,
Our broad strong mother, the innocent earth,
Mother of all things beautiful, blameless,
Mother of hopes that her strength makes tameless,
Where the voices of grief and of battle are dumb,
And the whole world laughs with the light of her mirth.

Over the fields, where the cool winds sweep,
Black with the mould and brown with the loam,
Where the thin green spears of the wheat are appearing,
And the high-ho shouts from the smoky clearing;
Over the widths, where the cloud shadows creep;
Over the fields and the fallows we come;

Over the swamps with their pensive noises,
Where the burnished cup of the marigold gleams;
Skirting the reeds, where the quick winds shiver
On the swelling breast of the dimpled river,
And the blue of the king-fisher hangs and poises,
Watching a spot by the edge of the streams;

By the miles of the fences warped and dyed
With the white-hot noons and their withering fires,
Where the rough bees trample the creamy bosoms
Of the hanging tufts of the elder blossoms,
And the spiders weave, and the grey snakes hide,
In the crannied gloom of the stones and the briers;

Over the meadow land sprouting with thistle,
Where the humming wings of the blackbirds pass,
Where the hollows are banked with the violets flowering,
And the long-limbed pendulous elms are towering,
Where the robins are loud with their voluble whistle,
And the ground sparrow scurries away through the grass,

Where the restless bobolink loiters and woos
Down in the hollows and over the swells,
Dropping in and out of the shadows,

Sprinkling his music about the meadows,
Whistles and little checks and coos,
And the tinkle of glassy bells;

Into the dim woods full of the tombs
Of the dead trees soft in their sepulchres,
Where the pensive throats of the shy birds hidden,
Pipe to us strangely entering unbidden,
And tenderly still in the tremulous glooms
The trilliums scatter their white-winged stars;

Up to the hills where our tired hearts rest,
Loosen, and halt, and regather their dreams;
Up to the hills, where the winds restore us,
Clearing our eyes to the beauty before us,
Earth with the glory of life on her breast,
Earth with the gleam of her cities and streams.

Here we shall commune with her and no other;
Care and the battle of life shall cease;
Men her degenerate children behind us,
Only the might of her beauty shall bind us,
Full of rest, as we gaze on the face of our mother,
Earth in the health and the strength of her peace.

Archibald Lampman

Gentleness

Blind multitudes that jar confusedly
At strife, earth's children, will ye never rest
From toils made hateful here, and dawns distressed
With ravelling self-engendered misery?
And will ye never know, till sleep shall see.
Your graves, how dreadful and how dark indeed
Are pride, self-will, and blind-voiced anger, greed,
And malice with its subtle cruelty?

How beautiful is gentleness, whose face
Like April sunshine, or the summer rain,
Swells everywhere the buds of generous thought?
So easy, and so sweet it is; its grace
Smooths out so soon the tangled knots of pain.
Can ye not learn it? will ye not be taught?

Archibald Lampman

God-Speed to the Snow

March is slain; the keen winds fly;
Nothing more is thine to do;
April kisses thee good-bye;
Thou must haste and follow too;
Silent friend that guarded well
Withered things to make us glad,
Shyest friend that could not tell
Half the kindly thought he had.
Haste thee, speed thee, O kind snow;
Down the dripping valleys go,
From the fields and gleaming meadows,
Where the slaying hours behold thee,
From the forests whose slim shadows,
Brown and leafless cannot fold thee,
Through the cedar lands aflame
With gold light that cleaves and quivers,
Songs that winter may not tame,
Drone of pines and laugh of rivers.
May thy passing joyous be
To thy father, the great sea,
For the sun is getting stronger;
Earth hath need of thee no longer;
Go, kind snow, God-speed to thee!

Archibald Lampman

Good Speech

Think not, because thine inmost heart means well,
Thou hast the freedom of rude speech: sweet words
Are like the voices of returning birds
Filling the soul with summer, or a bell
That calls the weary and the sick to prayer.
Even as thy thought, so let thy speech be fair.

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 March

The sun falls warm: the southern winds awake:
The air seethes upwards with a steamy shiver:
Each dip of the road is now a crystal lake,
And every rut a little dancing river.
Through great soft clouds that sunder overhead
The deep sky breaks as pearly blue as summer:
Out of a cleft beside the river's bed
Flaps the black crow, the first demure newcomer.

The last seared drifts are eating fast away
With glassy tinkle into glittering laces:
Dogs lie asleep, and little children play
With tops and marbles in the sun-bare places;
And I that stroll with many a thoughtful pause
Almost forget that winter ever was.

Archibald Lampman

In May

Grief was my master yesternight;
To-morrow I may grieve again;
But now along the windy plain
The clouds have taken flight.

The sowers in the furrows go;
The lusty river brimmeth on;
The curtains from the hills are gone;
The leaves are out; and lo,

The silvery distance of the day,
The light horizons, and between
The glory of the perfect green,
The tumult of the May.

The bobolinks at noonday sing
More softly than the softest flute,
And lightlier than the lightest lute
Their fairy tambours ring.

The roads far off are towered with dust;
The cherry-blooms are swept and thinned;
In yonder swaying elms the wind
Is charging gust on gust.

But here there is no stir at all;
The ministers of sun and shadow
Horde all the perfumes of the meadow
Behind a grassy wall.

An infant rivulet wind-free
Adown the guarded hollow sets,
Over whose brink the violets
Are nodding peacefully.

From pool to pool it prattles by;
The flashing swallows dip and pass,
Above the tufted marish grass,
And here at rest am I.

I care not for the old distress,
Nor if to-morrow bid me moan;
To-day is mine, and I have known
An hour of blessedness.

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

In October

Along the waste, a great way off, the pines,
Like tall slim priests of storm, stand up and bar
The low long strip of dolorous red that lines
The under west, where wet winds moan afar.
The cornfields all are brown, and brown the meadows
With the blown leaves' wind-heaped tracteries,
And the brown thistle stems that cast no shadows,
And bear no bloom for bees.

As slowly earthward leaf by red leaf slips,
The sad leaves rustle in chill misery,
A soft strange inner sound of pain-crazed lips,
That move and murmur incoherently;
As if all leaves, that yet have breath, were sighing,
With pale hushed throats, for death is at the door,
So many low soft masses for the dying
Sweet leaves that live no more.

Here I will sit upon this naked stone,
Draw my coat closer with my numbed hands,
And hear the ferns sigh, and the wet woods moan,
And send my heart out to the ashen lands;
And I will ask myself what golden madness,
What balmed breaths of dreamland spicery,
What visions of soft laughter and light sadness
Were sweet last month to me.

The dry dead leaves flit by with thin weird tunes,
Like failing murmurs of some conquered creed,
Graven in mystic markings with strange runes,
That none but stars and biting winds may read;
Here I will wait a little; I am weary,
Not torn with pain of any lurid hue,
But only still and very gray and dreary,
Sweet sombre lands, like you.

Archibald Lampman

Indian Summer

The old grey year is near his term in sooth,
And now with backward eye and soft-laid palm
Awakens to a golden dream of youth,
A second childhood lovely and most calm,
And the smooth hour about his misty head
An awning of enchanted splendour weaves,
Of maples, amber, purple and rose-red,
And droop-limbed elms down-dropping golden leaves.
With still half-fallen lids he sits and dreams
Far in a hollow of the sunlit wood,
Lulled by the murmur of thin-threading streams,
Nor sees the polar armies overflow
The darkening barriers of the hills, nor hears
The north-wind ringing with a thousand spears.

Archibald Lampman

Inter Vias

'Tis a land where no hurricane falls,
But the infinite azure regards
Its waters for ever, its walls
Of granite, its limitless swards;
Where the fens to their innermost pool
With the chorus of May are aring,
And the glades are wind-winnowed and cool
With perpetual spring;

Where folded and half withdrawn
The delicate wind-flowers blow,
And the bloodroot kindles at dawn
Her spiritual taper of snow;
Where the limits are met and spanned
By a waste that no husbandman tills,
And the earth-old pine forests stand
In the hollows of hills.

'Tis the land that our babies behold,
Deep gazing when none are aware;
And the great-hearted seers of old
And the poets have known it, and there
Made halt by the well-heads of truth
On their difficult pilgrimage
From the rose-ruddy gardens of youth
To the summits of age.

Now too, as of old, it is sweet
With a presence remote and serene;
Still its byways are pressed by the feet
Of the mother immortal, its queen:
The huntress whose tresses, flung free,
And her fillets of gold, upon earth,
They only have honour to see
Who are dreamers from birth.

In her calm and her beauty supreme,
They have found her at dawn or at eve,
By the marge of some motionless stream,
Or where shadows rebuild or unweave
In a murmurous alley of pine,
Looking upward in silent surprise,
A figure, slow-moving, divine,
With inscrutable eyes.

Archibald Lampman

June

Long, long ago, it seems, this summer morn
That pale-browed April passed with pensive tread
Through the frore woods, and from its frost-bound bed
Woke the arbutus with her silver horn;
And now May, too, is fled,
The flower-crowned month, the merry laughing May,
With rosy feet and fingers dewy wet,
Leaving the woods and all cool gardens gay
With tulips and the scented violet.

Gone are the wind-flower and the adder-tongue
And the sad drooping bellwort, and no more
The snowy trilliums crowd the forest's floor;
The purpling grasses are no longer young,
And summer's wide-set door
O'er the thronged hills and the broad panting earth
Lets in the torrent of the later bloom,
Haytime, and harvest, and the after mirth,
The slow soft rain, the rushing thunder plume.

All day in garden alleys moist and dim,
The humid air is burdened with the rose;
In moss-deep woods the creamy orchid blows;
And now the vesper-sparrows' pealing hymn
From every orchard close
At eve comes flooding rich and silvery;
The daisies in great meadows swing and shine;
And with the wind a sound as of the sea
Roars in the maples and the topmost pine.

High in the hills the solitary thrush
Tunes magically his music of fine dreams,
In briary dells, by boulder-broken streams;
And wide and far on nebulous fields aflush
The mellow morning gleams.
The orange cone-flowers purple-bossed are there,
The meadow's bold-eyed gypsies deep of hue,
And slender hawkweed tall and softly fair,
And rosy tops of fleabane veiled with dew.

So with thronged voices and unhasting flight
The fervid hours with long return go by;
The far-heard hylas piping shrill and high
Tell the slow moments of the solemn night
With unremitting cry;
Lustrous and large out of the gathering drouth
The planets gleam; the baleful Scorpion
Trails his dim fires along the droused south;
The silent world-incrusted round moves on.

And all the dim night long the moon's white beams
Nestle deep down in every brooding tree,

And sleeping birds, touched with a silly glee,
Waken at midnight from their blissful dreams,
And carol brokenly.
Dim surging motions and uneasy dreads
Scare the light slumber from men's busy eyes,
And parted lovers on their restless beds
Toss and yearn out, and cannot sleep for sighs.

Oft have I striven, sweet month, to figure thee,
As dreamers of old time were wont to feign,
In living form of flesh, and striven in vain;
Yet when some sudden old-world mystery
Of passion fired my brain,
Thy shape hath flashed upon me like no dream,
Wandering with scented curls that heaped the breeze,
Or by the hollow of some reeded stream
Sitting waist-deep in white anemones;

And even as I glimpsed thee thou wert gone,
A dream for mortal eyes too proudly coy,
Yet in thy place for subtle thought's employ
The golden magic clung, a light that shone
And filled me with thy joy.
Before me like a mist that streamed and fell
All names and shapes of antique beauty passed
In garlanded procession with the swell
Of flutes between the beechen stems; and last,

I saw the Arcadian valley, the loved wood,
Alpheus stream divine, the sighing shore,
And through the cool green glades, awake once more,
Psyche, the white-limbed goddess, still pursued,
Fleet-footed as of yore,
The noonday ringing with her frightened peals,
Down the bright sward and through the reeds she ran,
Urged by the mountain echoes, at her heels
The hot-blown cheeks and trampling feet of Pan.

Archibald Lampman

Knowledge

What is more large than knowledge and more sweet;
Knowledge of thoughts and deeds, of rights and wrongs,
Of passions and of beauties and of songs;
Knowledge of life; to feel its great heart beat
Through all the soul upon her crystal seat;
To see, to feel, and evermore to know;
To till the old world's wisdom till it grow
A garden for the wandering of our feet.

Oh for a life of leisure and broad hours,
To think and dream, to put away small things,
This world's perpetual leaguer of dull naughts;
To wander like the bee among the flowers
Till old age find us weary, feet and wings
Grown heavy with the gold of many thoughts.

Archibald Lampman

Lament Of The Winds

We in sorrow coldly witting,
In the bleak world sitting, sitting,
By the forest, near the mould,
Heard the summer calling, calling,
Through the dead leaves falling, falling,
That her life grew faint and old.

And we took her up, and bore her,
With the leaves that moaned before her,
To the holy forest bowers,
Where the trees were dense and serried,
And her corpse we buried, buried,
In the graveyard of the flowers.

Now the leaves, as death grows vaster,
Yellowing deeper, dropping faster,
All the grave wherein she lies
With their bodies cover, cover,
With their hearts that love her, love her,
For they live not when she dies:

And we left her so, but stay not
Of our tears, and yet we may not,
Though they coldly thickly fall,
Give the dead leaves any, any,
For they lie so many, many,
That we cannot weep for all.

Archibald Lampman

Life and Nature

I passed through the gates of the city,
The streets were strange and still,
Through the doors of the open churches
The organs were moaning shrill.

Through the doors and the great high windows
I heard the murmur of prayer,
And the sound of their solemn singing
Streamed out on the sunlit air;

A sound of some great burden
That lay on the world's dark breast,
Of the old, and the sick, and the lonely,
And the weary that cried for rest.

I strayed through the midst of the city
Like one distracted or mad.
'Oh, Life! Oh, Life!' I kept saying,
And the very word seemed sad.

I passed through the gates of the city,
And I heard the small birds sing,
I laid me down in the meadows
Afar from the bell-ringing.

In the depth and the bloom of the meadows
I lay on the earth's quiet breast,
The poplar fanned me with shadows,
And the veery sang me to rest.

Blue, blue was the heaven above me,
And the earth green at my feet;
'Oh, Life! Oh, Life!' I kept saying,
And the very word seemed sweet.

Archibald Lampman

Love-Doubt

Yearning upon the faint rose-curves that flit
About her child-sweet mouth and innocent cheek,
And in her eyes watching with eyes all meek
The light and shadow of laughter, I would sit
Mute, knowing out two souls might never knit;
As if a pale proud lily-flower should seek
The love of some red rose, but could not speak
One word of her blithe tongue to tell of it.

For oh, my Love was sunny-lipped and stirred
With all swift light and sound and gloom not long
Retained; I, with dreams weighed, that ever heard
Sad burdens echoing through the loudest throng
She, the wild song of some May-merry bird;
I, but the listening maker of a song.

Archibald Lampman

Love-Wonder

Or whether sad or joyous be her hours,
Yet ever is she good and ever fair.
If she be glad, 'tis like a child's wild air,
Who claps her hands above a heap of flowers;
And if she's sad, it is no cloud that lowers,
Rather a saint's pale grace, whose golden hair
Gleams like a crown, whose eyes are like a prayer
From some quiet window under minister towers.

But ah, Beloved, how shall I be taught
To tell this truth in any rhymed line?
For words and woven phrases fall to naught,
Lost in the silence of one dream divine,
Wrapped in the beating wonder of this thought:
Even thou, who art so precious, thou art mine!

Archibald Lampman

March

Over the dripping roofs and sunk snow-barrows,
The bells are ringing loud and strangely near,
The shout of children dins upon mine ear
Shrilly, and like a flight of silvery arrows
Showers the sweet gossip of the British sparrows,
Gathered in noisy knots of one or two,
To joke and chatter just as mortals do
Over the days long tale of joys and sorrows;

Talk before bed-time of bold deeds together,
Of thefts and fights, of hard-times and the weather,
Till sleep disarm them, to each little brain
Bringing tucked wings and many a blissful dream,
Visions of wind and sun, of field and stream,
And busy barn-yards with their scattered grain.

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

Midsummer Night

Mother of balms and soothings manifold,
Quiet-breathed night whose brooding hours are seven,
To whom the voices of all rest are given,
And those few stars whose scattered names are told,
Far off beyond the westward hills outrolled,
Darker than thou, more still, more dreamy even,
The golden moon leans in the dusky heaven,
And under the one star-a point of gold:

And all go slowly lingering toward the west,
As we go down forgetfully to our rest,
Weary of daytime, tired of noise and light:
Ah, it was time that thou should'st come; for we
Were sore athirst, and had great need of thee,
Thou sweet physician, balmy-blossomed night.

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

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Archibald Lampman

Music

Move on, light hands, so strongly tenderly,
Now with dropped calm and yearning undersong,
Now swift and loud, tumultuously strong,
And I in darkness, sitting near to thee,
Shall not only hear, and feel, but shall not see,
One hour made passionately bright with dreams,
Keen glimpses of life's splendour, dashing gleams
Of what we would, and what we cannot be.

Surely not painful ever, yet not glad,
Shall such hours be to me, but blindly sweet,
Sharp with all yearning and all fact at strife,
Dreams that shine by with unremembered feet,
And tones that like far distance make this life
Spectral and wonderful and strangely sad.

Archibald Lampman

New Year's Eve

Once on the year's last eve in my mind's might
Sitting in dreams, not sad, nor quite elysian,
Balancing all 'twixt wonder and derision,
Methought my body and all this world took flight,
And vanished from me, as a dream, outright;
Leaning out thus in sudden strange decision,
I saw as it were in the flashing of a vision,
Far down between the tall towers of the night,
Borne by great winds in awful unison,
The teeming masses of mankind sweep by,
Even as a glittering river with deep sound
And innumerable banners, rolling on
Over the starry border glooms that bound
The last gray space in dim eternity.

And all that strange unearthly multitude
Seemed twisted in vast seething companies,
That evermore with hoarse and terrible cries
And desperate encounter at mad feud
Plunged onward, each in its implacable mood
Borne down over the trampled blazonries
Of other faiths and other phantasies,
Each falling furiously, and each pursued;
So sped they on with tumult vast and grim,
But ever meseemed beyond them I could see
White-haloed groups that sought perpetually
The figure of one crowned and sacrificed;
And faint, far forward, floating tall and dim,
The banner of our Lord and Master, Christ.

Archibald Lampman

On Lake Temiscamingue

A single dreary elm, that stands between
The sombre forest and the wan-lit lake,
Halves with its slim gray stem and pendent green
The shadowed point. Beyond it without break
Bold brows of pine-topped granite bend away,
Far to the southward, fading off in grand
Soft folds of looming purple. Cool and gray,
The point runs out, a blade of thinnest sand.
Two rivers meet beyond it: wild and clear,
Their deepening thunder breaks upon the ear-
The one descending from its forest home
By many an eddied pool and murmuring fall-
The other cloven through the mountain wall,
A race of tumbled rocks, a road of foam.

Archibald Lampman

On The Companionship With Nature

Let us be much with Nature; not as they
That labour without seeing, that employ
Her unloved forces, blindly without joy;
Nor those whose hands and crude delights obey
The old brute passion to hunt down and slay;
But rather as children of one common birth,
Discerning in each natural fruit of earth
Kinship and bond with this diviner clay.
Let us be with her wholly at all hours,
With the fond lover's zest, who is content
If his ear hears, and if his eye but sees;
So shall we grow like her in mould and bent,
Our bodies stately as her blessed trees,
Our thoughts as sweet and sumptuous as her flowers.

Archibald Lampman

One Day

The trees rustle; the wind blows
Merrily out of the town;
The shadows creep, the sun goes
Steadily over and down.

In a brown gloom the moats gleam;
Slender the sweet wife stands;
Her lips are red; her eyes dream;
Kisses are warm on her hands.

The child moans; the hours slip
Bitterly over her head:
In a gray dusk, the tears drip;
Mother is up there-dead.

The hermit hears the strange bright
Murmur of life at play;
In the waste day and waste night
Times to rebel and to pray.

The laborer toils in gray wise,
Godlike and patient and calm;
The beggar moans; his bleared eyes
Measure the dust in his palm.

The wise man, marks the flow and ebb
Hidden and held aloof:
In his deep mind is laid the web,
Shuttles are driving the woof.

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

Passion

As a weed beneath the ocean,
As a pool beneath a tree
Answers with each breath or motion
An imperious mastery;

So my spirit swift with passion
Finds in every look a sign,
Catching in some wondrous fashion
Every mood that governs thine.

In a moment it will borrow,
Flashing in a gusty train,
Laughter and desire and sorrow
Anger and delight and pain.

Archibald Lampman

Peccavi, Domine

O Power to whom this earthly clime
Is but an atom in the whole,
O Poet-heart of Space and Time,
O Maker and Immortal Soul,
Within whose glowing rings are bound,
Out of whose sleepless heart had birth
The cloudy blue, the starry round,
And this small miracle of earth:

Who liv'st in every living thing,
And all things are thy script and chart,
Who rid'st upon the eagle's wing,
And yearnest in the human heart;
O Riddle with a single clue,
Love, deathless, protean, secure,
The ever old, the ever new,
O Energy, serene and pure.

Thou, who art also part of me,
Whose glory I have sometime seen,
O Vision of the Ought-to-be,
O Memory of the Might-have-been,
I have had glimpses of thy way,
And moved with winds and walked with stars,
But, weary, I have fallen astray,
And, wounded, who shall count my scars?

O Master, all my strength is gone;
Unto the very earth I bow;
I have no light to lead me on;
With aching heart and burning brow,
I lie as one that travaileth
In sorrow more than he can bear;
I sit in darkness as of death,
And scatter dust upon my hair.

The God within my soul hath slept,
And I have shamed the nobler rule;
O Master, I have whined and crept;
O Spirit, I have played the fool.
Like him of old upon whose head
His follies hung in dark arrears,
I groan and travail in my bed,
And water it with bitter tears.

I stand upon thy mountain-heads,
And gaze until mine eyes are dim;
The golden morning glows and spreads;
The hoary vapours break and swim.
I see thy blossoming fields, divine,
Thy shining clouds, thy blessed trees--
And then that broken soul of mine--

How much less beautiful than these!

O Spirit, passionless, but kind,
Is there in all the world, I cry,
Another one so base and blind,
Another one so weak as I?
O Power, unchangeable, but just,
Impute this one good thing to me,
I sink my spirit to the dust
In utter dumb humility.

Archibald Lampman

Perfect Love

Beloved, 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

Personality

O differing human heart,
Why is it that I tremble when thine eyes,
Thy human eyes and beautiful human speech,
Draw me, and stir within my soul
That subtle ineradicable longing
For tender comradeship?
It is because I cannot all at once,
Through the half-lights and phantom-haunted mists
That separate and enshroud us life from life,
Discern the nearness or the strangeness of thy paths
Nor plumb thy depths.
I am like one that comes alone at night
To a strange stream, and by an unknown ford
Stands, and for a moment yearns and shrinks,
Being ignorant of the water, though so quiet it is,
So softly murmurous,
So silvered by the familiar moon.

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

Refuge

Where swallows and wheatfields are,
O hamlet brown and still,
O river that shineth far,
By meadow, pier, and mill:

O endless sunsteeped plain,
With forests in dim blue shrouds,
And little wisps of rain,
Falling from far-off clouds:

I come from the choking air
Of passion, doubt, and strife,
With a spirit and mind laid bare
To your healing breadth of life:

O fruitful and sacred ground,
O sunlight and summer sky,
Absorb me and fold me round,
For broken and tired am I.

Archibald Lampman

Sapphics

Clothed in splendour, beautifully sad and silent,
Comes the autumn over the woods and highlands,
Golden, rose-red, full of divine remembrance,
Full of foreboding.

Soon the maples, soon will the glowing birches,
Stripped of all that summer and love had dowered them,
Dream, sad-limbed, beholding their pomp and treasure
Ruthlessly scattered:

Yet they quail not: Winter with wind and iron
Comes and finds them silent and uncomplaining,
Finds them tameless, beautiful still and gracious,
Gravely enduring.

Me too changes, bitter and full of evil,
Dream by dream have plundered and left me naked,
Grey with sorrow. Even the days before me
Fade into twilight,

Mute and barren. Yet will I keep my spirit
Clear and valiant, brother to these my noble
Elms and maples, utterly grave and fearless,
Grandly ungrieving.

Brief the span is, counting the years of mortals,
Strange and sad; it passes, and then the bright earth,
Careless mother, gleaming with gold and azure,
Lovely with blossoms--

Shining white anemones, mixed with roses,
Daisies mild-eyed, grasses and honeyed clover--
You, and me, and all of us, met and equal,
Softly shall cover.

Archibald Lampman

September

Now hath the summer reached her golden close,
And, lost amid her corn-fields, bright of soul,
Scarcely perceives from her divine repose
How near, how swift, the inevitable goal:
Still, still, she smiles, though from her careless feet
The bounty and the fruitful strength are gone,
And through the soft long wondering days goes on
The silent sere decadence sad and sweet.

The kingbird and the pensive thrush are fled,
Children of light, too fearful of the gloom;
The sun falls low, the secret word is said,
The mouldering woods grow silent as the tomb;
Even the fields have lost their sovereign grace,
The cone-flower and the marguerite; and no more,
Across the river's shadow-haunted floor,
The paths of skimming swallows interlace.

Already in the outland wilderness
The forests echo with unwonted dins;
In clamorous gangs the gathering woodmen press
Northward, and the stern winter's toil begins.
Around the long low shanties, whose rough lines
Break the sealed dreams of many an unnamed lake,
Already in the frost-clear morns awake
The crash and thunder of the falling pines.

Where the tilled earth, with all its fields set free,
Naked and yellow from the harvest lies,
By many a loft and busy granary,
The hum and tumult of the thrashers rise;
There the tanned farmers labor without slack,
Till twilight deepens round the spouting mill,
Feeding the loosened sheaves, or with fierce will,
Pitching waist-deep upon the dusty stack.

Still a brief while, ere the old year quite pass,
Our wandering steps and wistful eyes shall greet
The leaf, the water, the beloved grass;
Still from these haunts and this accustomed seat
I see the wood-wrapt city, swept with light,
The blue long-shadowed distance, and, between,
The dotted farm-lands with their parcelled green,
The dark pine forest and the watchful height.

I see the broad rough meadow stretched away
Into the crystal sunshine, wastes of sod,
Acres of withered vervain, purple-gray,
Branches of aster, groves of goldenrod;
And yonder, toward the sunlit summit, strewn
With shadowy boulders, crowned and swathed with weed,
Stand ranks of silken thistles, blown to seed,

Long silver fleeces shining like the noon.

In far-off russet corn-fields, where the dry
Gray shocks stand peaked and withering, half concealed
In the rough earth, the orange pumpkins lie,
Full-ribbed; and in the windless pasture-field
The sleek red horses o'er the sun-warmed ground
Stand pensively about in companies,
While all around them from the motionless trees
The long clean shadows sleep without a sound.

Under cool elm-trees floats the distant stream,
Moveless as air; and o'er the vast warm earth
The fathomless daylight seems to stand and dream,
A liquid cool elixir-all its girth
Bound with faint haze, a frail transparency,
Whose lucid purple barely veils and fills
The utmost valleys and the thin last hills,
Nor mars one whit their perfect clarity.

Thus without grief the golden days go by,
So soft we scarcely notice how they wend,
And like a smile half happy, or a sigh,
The summer passes to her quiet end;
And soon, too soon, around the cumbered eaves
Sly frosts shall take the creepers by surprise,
And through the wind-touched reddening woods shall rise
October with the rain of ruined leaves.

Archibald Lampman

Sight

The world is bright with beauty, and its days
Are filled with music; could we only know
True ends from false, and lofty things from low;
Could we but tear away the walls that graze
Our very elbows in life's frosty ways;
Behold the width beyond us with its flow,
Its knowledge and its murmur and its glow,
Where doubt itself is but a golden haze.

Ah brothers, still upon our pathway lies
The shadow of dim weariness and fear,
Yet if we could but lift our earthwood eyes
To see, and open our dull eyes to hear,
Then should the wonder of this world draw near
And life's innumerable harmonies.

Archibald Lampman

Sleep

If any man, with sleepless care oppressed,
On many a night had risen, and addressed
His hand to make him out of joy and moan
An image of sweet sleep in carven stone,
Light touch by touch, in weary moments planned,
He would have wrought her with a patient hand,
Not like her brother death, with massive limb
And dreamless brow, unstartled, changeless, dim,
But very fair, though fitful and afraid,
More sweet and slight than any mortal maid.
Her hair he would have carved a mantle smooth
Down to her tender feet to wrap and soothe
All fevers in, yet barbed here and there
With many a hidden sting of restless care;
Her brow most quiet, thick with opiate rest,
Yet watchfully lined, as if some hovering guest
Of noiseless doubt were there; so too her eyes
His light hand would have carved in cunning wise
Broad with all languor of the drowsy South,
Most beautiful, but held askance; her mouth
More soft and round than any rose half-spread,
Yet ever twisted with some nervous dread.
He would have made her with one marble foot,
Frail as a snow-white feather, forward put,
Bearing sweet medicine for all distress,
Smooth languor and unstrung forgetfulness;
The other held a little back for dread;
One slender moonpale hand held forth to shed
Soft slumber dripping from its pearly tip
Into wide eyes; the other on her lip.
So in the watches of his sleepless care
The cunning artist would have wrought her fair;
Shy goddess, at keen seeking most afraid
Yet often coming, when we last have prayed.

Archibald Lampman

Snow

White are the far-off plains, and white
The fading forests grow;
The wind dies out along the height,
And denser still the snow,
A gathering weight on roof and tree,
Falls down scarce audibly.

The road before me smooths and fills
Apace, and all about
The fences dwindle, and the hills
Are blotted slowly out;
The naked trees loom spectrally
Into the dim white sky.

The meadows and far-sheeted streams
Lie still without a sound;
Like some soft minister of dreams
The snow-fall hoods me round;
In wood and water, earth and air,
A silence everywhere.

Save when at lonely intervals
Some farmer's sleigh, urged on,
With rustling runners and sharp bells,
Swings by me and is gone;
Or from the empty waste I hear
A sound remote and clear;

The barking of a dog, or call
To cattle, sharply pealed,
Borne echoing from some wayside stall
Or barnyard far a-field;
Then all is silent, and the snow
Falls, settling soft and slow.

The evening deepens, and the gray
Folds closer earth and sky;
The world seems shrouded far away;
Its noises sleep, and I,
As secret as yon buried stream,
Plod dumbly on, and dream.

Archibald Lampman

Snowbirds

Along the narrow sandy height
I watch them swiftly come and go,
Or round the leafless wood,
Like flurries of wind-driven snow,
Revolving in perpetual flight,
A changing multitude.

Nearer and nearer still they sway,
And, scattering in a circled sweep,
Rush down without a sound;
And now I see them peer and peep,
Across yon level bleak and gray,
Searching the frozen ground,-

Until a little wind upheaves,
And makes a sudden rustling there,
And then they drop their play,
Flash up into the sunless air,
And like a flight of silver leaves
Swirl round and sweep away.

Archibald Lampman

Solitude

How still it is here in the woods. The trees
Stand motionless, as if they did not dare
To stir, lest it should break the spell. The air
Hangs quiet as spaces in a marble frieze.
Even this little brook, that runs at ease,
Whispering and gurgling in its knotted bed,
Seems but to deepen with its curling thread
Of sound the shadowy sun-pierced silences.

Sometimes a hawk screams or a woodpecker
Startles the stillness from its fixed mood
With his loud careless tap. Sometimes I hear
The dreamy white-throat from some far-off tree
Pipe slowly on the listening solitude
His five pure notes succeeding pensively.

Archibald Lampman

Song

Songs that could span the earth,
When leaping thought had stirred them,
In many an hour since birth,
We heard or dreamed we heard them.

Sometimes to all their sway
We yield ourselves half fearing,
Sometimes with hearts grown grey
We curse ourselves for hearing.

We toil and but begin;
In vain our spirits fret them,
We strive, and cannot win,
Nor evermore forget them.

A light that will not stand,
That comes and goes in flashes,
Fair fruits that in the hand
Are turned to dust and ashes.

Yet still the deep thoughts ring
Around and through and through us,
Sweet mights that make us sing,
But bring no resting to us.

Archibald Lampman

Song of The Stream-Drops

By silent forest and field and mossy stone,
We come from the wooden hill, and we go to the sea.
We labour, and sing sweet songs, but we never moan,
For our mother, the sea, is calling us cheerily.
We have heard her calling us many and many a day
From the cool grey stones and the white sands far away.

The way is long, and winding and slow is the track,
The sharp rocks fret us, the eddies bring us delay,
But we sing sweet songs to our mother, and answer her back;
Gladly we answer our mother, sweetly repay.
Oh, we hear, we hear her singing wherever we roam,
Far, far away in the silence, calling us home.

Poor mortal, your ears are dull, and you cannot hear;
But we, we hear it, the breast of our mother abeat;
Low, far away, sweet and solemn and clear,
Under the hush of the night, under the noon-tide heat:
And we sing sweet songs to our mother, for so we shall please her best,
Songs of beauty and peace, freedom and infinite rest.

We sing, and sing, through the grass and the stones and the reeds,
And we never grow tired, though we journey ever and aye,
Dreaming, and dreaming, wherever the long way leads,
Of the far cool rocks and the rush of the wind and the spray.
Under the sun and the stars we murmur and dance and are free,
And we dream and dream of our mother, the width of the sheltering sea.

Archibald Lampman

Spring On The River

O sun, shine hot on the river;
For the ice is turning an ashen hue,
And the still bright water is looking through,
And the myriad streams are greeting you
With a ballad of life to the giver,
From forest and field and sunny town,
Meeting and running and tripping down,
With laughter and song to the river.

Oh! the din on the boats by the river;
The barges are ringing while day avails,
With sound of hewing and hammering nails,
Planing and painting and swinging pails,
All day in their shrill endeavor;
For the waters brim over their wintry cup,
And the grinding ice is breaking up,
And we must away down the river.

Oh! the hum and the toil of the river;
The ridge of the rapid sprays and skips:
Loud and low by the water's lips,
Tearing the wet pines into strips,
The saw mill is moaning ever.
The little grey sparrow skips and calls
On the rocks in the rain of the water falls,
And the logs are adrift in the river.

Oh! restlessly whirls the river;
The rivulets run and the cataract drones:
The spiders are flitting over the stones:
Summer winds float and the cedar moans;
And the eddies gleam and quiver.
O sun; shine hot, shine long and abide
In the glory and power of the summer tide
On the swift longing face of the river.

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

Sunset

From this windy bridge at rest,
In some former curious hour,
We have watched the city's hue,
All along the orange west,
Cupola and pointed tower,
Darken into solid blue.

Tho' the biting north wind breaks
Full across this drifted hold,
Let us stand with iced cheeks
Watching westward as of old;

Past the violet mountain-head
To the farthest fringe of pine,
Where far off the purple-red
Narrows to a dusky line,
And the last pale splendours die
Slowly from the olive sky;

Till the thin clouds wear away
Into threads of purple-gray,
And the sudden stars between
Brighten in the pallid green;

Till above the spacious east,
Slow returned one by one,
Like pale prisoners released
From the dungeons of the sun,
Capella and her train appear
In the glittering Charioteer;

Till the rounded moon shall grow
Great above the eastern snow,
Shining into burnished gold;
And the silver earth outrolled,
In the misty yellow light,
Shall take on the width of night.

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 Autumn Waste

There is no break in all the wide grey sky,
Nor light on any field, and the wind grieves,
And talks of death. Where cold grey waters lie
Round greyer stones, and the new-fallen leaves
Heap the chill hollows of the naked woods,
A lisping moan, an inarticulate cry,
Creeps far among the charnel solitudes,
Numbing the waste with mindless misery.
In these bare paths, these melancholy lands,
What dream, or flesh, could ever have been young?
What lovers have gone forth with linked hands?
What flowers could ever have bloomed, what birds have sung?
Life, hopes, and human things seem wrapped away,
With shrouds and spectres, in one long decay.

Archibald Lampman

The Better Day

Harsh thoughts, blind angers, and fierce hands,
That keep this restless world at strife,
Mean passions that, like choking sands,
Perplex the stream of life,

Pride and hot envy and cold greed,
The cankers of the loftier will,
What if ye triumph, and yet bleed?
Ah, can ye not be still?

Oh, shall there be no space, no time,
No century of weal in store,
No freehold in a nobler clime,
Where men shall strive no more?

Where every motion of the heart
Shall serve the spirit's master-call,
Where self shall be the unseen part,
And human kindness all?

Or shall we but by fits and gleams
Sink satisfied, and cease to rave,
Find love but in the rest of dreams,
And peace but in the grave?

Archibald Lampman

The Bird and the Hour

The sun looks over a little hill
And floods the valley with gold-
A torrent of gold;
And the hither field is green and still;
Beyond it a cloud outrolled,
Is glowing molten and bright;
And soon the hill, and the valley and all,
With a quiet fall,
Shall be gathered into the night.
And yet a moment more,
Out of the silent wood,
As if from the closing door
Of another world and another lovelier mood,
Hear'st thou the hermit pour-
So sweet! so magical!-
His golden music, ghostly beautiful.

Archibald Lampman

The Child's Music Lesson

Why weep ye in your innocent toil at all?
Sweet little hands, why halt and tremble so?
Full many a wrong note falls, but let it fall!
Each note to me is like a golden glow;
Each broken cadence like a mourning call;
Nay, clear and smooth I would not have you go,
Soft little hands, upon the curtained threshold set
Of this long life of labour, and unrestful fret.

Soft sunlight flickers on the checkered green:
Warm winds are stirring round my dreaming seat:
Among the yellow pumpkin blooms, that lean
Their crumpled rims beneath the heavy heat,
The striped bees in lazy labour glean
From bell to bell with golden-feathered feet;
Yet even here the voices of hard life go by;
Outside, the city strains with its eternal cry.

Here, as I sit-the sunlight on my face,
And shadows of green leaves upon mine eyes-
My heart, a garden in a hidden place,
Is full of folded buds of memories.
Stray hither then with all your old time grace,
Child-voices, trembling from the uncertain keys;
Play on, ye little fingers, touch the settled gloom,
And quickly, one by one, my waiting buds will bloom.

Ah me, I may not set my feet again
In any part of that old garden dear,
Or pluck one widening blossom, for my pain;
But only at the wicket gaze I hear:
Old scents creep into mine inactive brain,
Smooth scents of things, I may not come anear;
I see, far off, old beaten pathways they adorn;
I cannot feel with hands the blossom of the thorn.

Toil on, sweet hands; once more I see the child;
The little child, that was myself, appears,
And all the old time beauties, undefiled,
Shine back to me across the opening years,
Quick griefs, that made the tender bosom wild,
Short blinding gusts, that died in passionate tears,
Sweet life, with all its change, that now so happy seems,
With all its child-heart glories, and untutored dreams.

Play on into the golden sunshine so,
Sweeter than all great artists' labouring:
I too was like you once, an age ago:
God keep you, dimpled fingers, for you bring
Quiet gliding ghosts to me of joy and woe,
No certain things at all that thrill or sting,
But only sounds and scents and savours of things bright,

No joy or aching pain; but only dim delight.

Archibald Lampman

The City

Beyond the dusky corn-fields, toward the west,
Dotted with farms, beyond the shallow stream,
Through drifts of elm with quiet peep and gleam,
Curved white and slender as a lady's wrist,
Faint and far off out of the autumn mist,
Even as a pointed jewel softly set
In clouds of colour warmer, deeper yet,
Crimson and gold and rose and amethyst,
Toward dayset, where the journeying sun grown old
Hangs lowly westward darker now than gold,
With the soft sun-touch of the yellowing hours
Made lovelier, I see with dreaming eyes,
Even as a dream out of a dream, arise
The bell-tongued city with its glorious towers.

Archibald Lampman

The City (2)

Canst thou not rest, O city,
That liest so wide and fair;
Shall never an hour bring pity,
Nor end be found for care?

Thy walls are high in heaven,
Thy streets are gay and wide,
Beneath thy towers at even
The dreamy waters glide.

Thou art fair as the hills at morning,
And the sunshine loveth thee,
But its light is a gloom of warning
On a soul no longer free.

The curses of gold are about thee,
And thy sorrow deepeneth still;
One madness within and without thee,
One battle blind and shrill.

I see the crowds for ever
Go by with hurrying feet;
Through doors that darken never
I hear the engines beat.

Through days and nights that follow
The hidden mill-wheel strains;
In the midnight's windy hollow
I hear the roar of trains.

And still the day fulfilleth,
And still the night goes round,
And the guest-hall boometh and shrilleth,
With the dance's mocking sound.

In chambers of gold elysian,
The cymbals clash and clang,
But the days are gone like a vision
When the people wrought and sang.

And toil hath fear for neighbour,
Where singing lips are dumb,
And life is one long labour,
Till death or freedom come.

Ah! the crowds that for ever are flowing--
They neither laugh nor weep--
I see them coming and going,
Like things that move in sleep:

Grey sires and burdened brothers,
The old, the young, the fair,

Wan cheeks of pallid mothers,
And the girls with golden hair.

Care sits in many a fashion,
Grown grey on many a head,
And lips are turned to ashen
Whose years have right to red.

Canst thou not rest, O city,
That liest so wide, so fair;
Shalt never an hour bring pity,
Nor end be found for care?

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 Clearer Self

Before me grew the human soul,
And after I am dead and gone,
Through grades of effort and control
The marvellous work shall still go on.

Each mortal in his little span
Hath only lived, if he have shown
What greatness there can be in man
Above the measured and the known;

How through the ancient layers of night,
In gradual victory secure,
Grows ever with increasing light
The Energy serene and pure:

The Soul, that from a monstrous past,
From age to age, from hour to hour,
Feels upward to some height at last
Of unimagined grace and power.

Though yet the sacred fire be dull,
In folds of thwarting matter furled,
Ere death be nigh, while life is full,
O Master Spirit of the world,

Grant me to know, to seek, to find,
In some small measure though it be,
Emerging from the waste and blind,
The clearer self, the grander me!

Archibald Lampman

The Coming of Winter

Out of the Northland sombre weirds are calling;
A shadow falleth southward day by day;
Sad summers arms grow cold; his fire is falling;
His feet draw back to give the stern one way.

It is the voice and shadow of the slayer,
Slayer of loves, sweet world, slayer of dreams;
Make sad thy voice with sombre plaint and prayer;
Make gray thy woods, and darken all they streams.

Black grows the river, blacker drifts the eddy:
The sky is grey; the woods are cold below:
Oh make the bosom, and thy sad lips ready,
For the cold kisses of the folding snow.

Archibald Lampman

The Cup of Life

One after one the high emotions fade;
Time's wheeling measure empties and refills
Year after year; we seek no more the hills
That lured our youth divine and unafraid,
But swarming on some common highway, made
Beaten and smooth, plod onward with blind feet
And only where the crowded crossways meet
We halt and question, anxious and dismayed.
Yet can we not escape it; some we know
Have angered and grown mad, some scornfully laughed;
Yet surely to each lip--to mine to thin--
Comes with strange scent and pallid poisonous glow
The cup of Life, that dull Circean draught,
That taints us all, and turns the half to swine.

Archibald Lampman

The Dog

'Grotesque!' we said, the moment we espied him,
For there he stood, supreme in his conceit,
With short ears close together and queer feet
Planted irregularly: first we tried him
With jokes, but they were lost; we then defied him
With bantering questions and loose criticism:
He did not like, I'm sure, our catechism,
But whisked and snuffed a little as we eyed him.

Then flung we balls, and out and clear away,
Up the white slope, across the crusted snow,
To where a broken fence stands in the way,
Against the sky-line, a mere row of pegs,
Quicker than thought we saw him flash and go,
A straight mad scuttling of four crooked legs.

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 moored 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 Islet And The Palm

O gentle sister spirit, when you smile
My soul is like a lonely coral isle,
An islet shadowed by a single palm,
Ringed round with reef and foam, but inly calm.

And all day long I listen to the speech
Of wind and water on my charmed beach:
I see far off beyond mine outer shore
The ocean flash, and hear his harmless roar.

And in the night-time when the glorious sun,
With all his life and all his light, is done,
The wind still murmurs in my slender tree,
And shakes the moonlight on the silver sea.

Archibald Lampman

The King's Sabbath

Once idly in his hall king Olave sat
Pondering, and with his dagger whittled chips;
And one drew near to him with austere lips,
Saying 'To-morrow is Monday,' and at that
The king said nothing, but held forth his flat
Broad palm, and bending on his mighty hips,
Took up and mutely laid thereon the slips
Of scattered wood, as on a hearth, and gat
From off the embers near, a burning brand.
Kindling the pile with this, the dreaming Dane
Sat silent with his eyes set and his bland
Proud mouth, tight-woven, smiling drawn with pain,
Watching the fierce fire flare, and wax, and wane,
Hiss and burn down upon his shrivelled hand.

Archibald Lampman

The Land Of Pallas

Methought I journeyed along ways that led for ever
Throughout a happy land where strife and care were dead,
And life went by me flowing like a placid river
Past sandy eyots where the shifting shoals make head.

A land where beauty dwelt supreme, and right, the donor
Of peaceful days; a land of equal gifts and deeds,
Of limitless fair fields and plenty had with honour;
A land of kindly tillage and untroubled meads,

Of gardens, and great fields, and dreaming rose-wreathed alleys,
Wherein at dawn and dusk the vesper sparrows sang;
Of cities set far off on hills down vista'd valleys,
And floods so vast and old, men wist not whence they sprang,

Of groves, and forest depths, and fountains softly welling,
And roads that ran soft-shadowed past the open doors,
Of mighty palaces and many a lofty dwelling,
Where all men entered and no master trod their floors.

A land of lovely speech, where every tone was fashioned
By generations of emotion high and sweet,
Of thought and deed and bearing lofty and impassioned;
A land of golden calm, grave forms, and fretless feet.

And every mode and saying of that land gave token
Of limits where no death or evil fortune fell,
And men lived out long lives in proud content unbroken,
For there no man was rich, none poor, but all were well.

And all the earth was common, and no base contriving
Of money of coined gold was needed there or known,
But all men wrought together without greed or striving,
And all the store of all to each man was his own.

From all that busy land, grey town, and peaceful village,
Where never jar was heard, nor wail, nor cry of strife,
From every laden stream and all the fields of tillage,
Arose the murmur and the kindly hum of life.

At morning to the fields came forth the men, each neighbour
Hand linked to other, crowned, with wreaths upon their hair,
And all day long with joy they gave their hands to labour,
Moving at will, unhastened, each man to his share.

At noon the women came, the tall fair women, bearing
Baskets of wicker in their ample hands for each,
And learned the day's brief tale, and how the fields were faring,
And blessed them with their lofty beauty and blithe speech.

And when the great day's toil was over, and the shadows
Grew with the flocking stars, the sound of festival

Rose in each city square, and all the country meadows,
Palace, and paven court, and every rustic hall.

Beside smooth streams, where alleys and green gardens meeting
Ran downward to the flood with marble steps, a throng
Came forth of all the folk, at even, gaily greeting,
With echo of sweet converse, jest, and stately song.

In all their great fair cities there was neither seeking
For power of gold, nor greed of lust, nor desperate pain
Of multitudes that starve, or, in hoarse anger breaking,
Beat at the doors of princes, break and fall in vain.

But all the children of that peaceful land, like brothers,
Lofty of spirit, wise, and ever set to learn
The chart of neighbouring souls, the bent and need of others,
Thought only of good deeds, sweet speech, and just return.

And there there was no prison, power of arms, nor palace,
Where prince or judge held sway, for none was needed there;
Long ages since the very names of fraud and malice
Had vanished from men's tongues, and died from all men's care.

And there there were no bonds of contract, deed, or marriage,
No oath, nor any form, to make the word more sure,
For no man dreamed of hurt, dishonour, or miscarriage,
Where every thought was truth, and every heart was pure.

There were no castes of rich or poor, of slave or master,
Where all were brothers, and the curse of gold was dead,
But all that wise fair race to kindlier ends and vaster
Moved on together with the same majestic tread.

And all the men and women of that land were fairer
Than even the mightiest of our meaner race can be;
The men like gentle children, great of limb, yet rarer
For wisdom and high thought, like kings for majesty.

And all the women through great ages of bright living,
Grown goodlier of stature, strong, and subtly wise,
Stood equal with the men, calm counsellors, ever giving
The fire and succour of proud faith and dauntless eyes.

And as I journeyed in that land I reached a ruin,
The gateway of a lonely and secluded waste,
A phantom of forgotten time and ancient doing,
Eaten by age and violence, crumbled and defaced.

On its grim outer walls the ancient world's sad glories
Were recorded in fire; upon its inner stone,
Drawn by dead hands, I saw, in tales and tragic stories,
The woe and sickness of an age of fear made known.

And lo, in that grey storehouse, fallen to dust and rotten,
Lay piled the traps and engines of forgotten greed,
The tomes of codes and canons, long disused, forgotten,
The robes and sacred books of many a vanished creed.

An old grave man I found, white-haired and gently spoken,
Who, as I questioned, answered with a smile benign,
'Long years have come and gone since these poor gauds were broken,
Broken and banished from a life made more divine.

'But still we keep them stored as once our sires deemed fitting,
The symbol of dark days and lives remote and strange,
Lest o'er the minds of any there should come unwitting
The thought of some new order and the lust of change.

'If any grow disturbed, we bring them gently hither,
To read the world's grim record and the sombre lore
Massed in these pitiless vaults, and they returning thither,
Bear with them quieter thoughts, and make for change no more.'

And thence I journeyed on by one broad way that bore me
Out of that waste, and as I passed by tower and town
I saw amid the limitless plain far out before me
A long low mountain, blue as beryl, and its crown

Was capped by marble roofs that shone like snow for whiteness,
Its foot was deep in gardens, and that blossoming plain
Seemed in the radiant shower of its majestic brightness
A land for gods to dwell in, free from care and pain.

And to and forth from that fair mountain like a river
Ran many a dim grey road, and on them I could see
A multitude of stately forms that seemed for ever
Going and coming in bright bands; and near to me

Was one that in his journey seemed to dream and linger,
Walking at whiles with kingly step, then standing still,
And him I met and asked him, pointing with my finger,
The meaning of the palace and the lofty hill.

Whereto the dreamer: 'Art thou of this land, my brother,
And knowest not the mountain and its crest of walls,
Where dwells the priestless worship of the all-wise mother?
That is the hill of Pallas; those her marble halls!

'There dwell the lords of knowledge and of thought increasing,
And they whom insight and the gleams of song uplift;
And thence as by a hundred conduits flows unceasing
The spring of power and beauty, an eternal gift.'

Still I passed on until I reached at length, not knowing

Whither the tangled and diverging paths might lead,
A land of baser men, whose coming and whose going
Were urged by fear, and hunger, and the curse of greed.

I saw the proud and fortunate go by me, faring
In fatness and fine robes, the poor oppressed and slow,
The faces of bowed men, and piteous women bearing
The burden of perpetual sorrow and the stamp of woe.

And tides of deep solicitude and wondering pity
Possessed me, and with eager and uplifted hands
I drew the crowd about me in a mighty city,
And taught the message of those other kindlier lands.

I preached the rule of Faith and brotherly Communion,
The law of Peace and Beauty and the death of Strife,
And painted in great words the horror of disunion,
The vainness of self-worship, and the waste of life.

I preached, but fruitlessly; the powerful from their stations
Rebuked me as an anarch, envious and bad,
And they that served them with lean hands and bitter patience
Smiled only out of hollow orbs, and deemed me mad.

And still I preached, and wrought, and still I bore my message,
For well I knew that on and upward without cease
The spirit works for ever, and by Faith and Presage
That somehow yet the end of human life is Peace.

Archibald Lampman

The Largest Life

I

I lie upon my bed and hear and see.
The moon is rising through the glistening trees;
And momentarily a great and sombre breeze,
With a vast voice returning fitfully,
Comes like a deep-toned grief, and stirs in me,
Somehow, by some inexplicable art,
A sense of my soul's strangeness, and its part
In the dark march of human destiny.
What am I, then, and what are they that pass
Yonder, and love and laugh, and mourn and weep?
What shall they know of me, or I, alas!
Of them? Little. At times, as if from sleep,
We waken to this yearning passionate mood,
And tremble at our spiritual solitude.

II

Nay, never once to feel we are alone,
While the great human heart around us lies:
To make the smile on other lips our own,
To live upon the light in others' eyes:
To breathe without a doubt the limped air
Of that most perfect love that knows no pain:
To say—I love you—only, and not care
Whether the love come back to us again:
Divinest self-forgetfulness, at first
A task, and then a tonic, then a need;
To greet with open hands the best and worst,
And only for another's wound to bleed:
This is to see the beauty that God meant,
Wrapped round with life, ineffably content.

III

There is a beauty at the goal of life,
A beauty growing since the world began,
Through every age and race, through lapse and strife
Till the great human soul complete her span.
Beneath the waves of storm that lash and burn,
The currents of blind passion that appall,
To listen and keep watch till we discern
The tide of sovereign truth that guides it all;
So to address our spirits to the height,
And so attune them to the valiant whole,
That the great light be clearer for our light,
And the great soul the stronger for our soul:
To have done this is to have lived, though fame
Remember us with no familiar name.

Archibald Lampman

The Little HandMaiden

The King's son walks in the garden fair-
Oh, the maiden's heart is merry!
He little knows for his toil and care,
That the bride is gone and the bower is bare.
Put on garments of white, my maidens!

The sun shines bright through the casement high-
Oh, the maiden's heart is merry!
The little handmaid, with a laughing eye,
Looks down on the king's son, strolling by.
Put on garments of white, my maidens!

'He little knows that the bride is gone,
And the Earl knows little as he;
She is fled with her lover afar last night
And the King's son is left to me.'

And back to her chamber with velvety step
The little handmaid did glide,
And a gold key took from her bosom sweet,
And opened the great chests wide.

She bound her hair with a band of blue,
And a garland of lilies sweet;
And put on her delicate silken shoes,
With roses at her feet.

She clad her body in spotless white,
With a girdle as red as blood.
The glad white raiment her beauty bound,
As the sepals blind the bud.

And round and round her white neck she flung
A necklace of sapphires blue;
On one white finger of either hand
A shining ring she drew.

And down the stairway and out of the door
She glided, as soft and light,
As an airy tuft of a thistle seed
Might glide through the grasses bright.

And into the garden sweet she stole-
The little birds carolled loud-
Her beauty shone as a star might shine
In the rift of the morning cloud.

The King's son walked in the garden fair,
And the little handmaiden came,
Through the midst of a shimmer of roses red,
Like a sunbeam through a flame.

The King's son marvelled, his heart leaped up,
'And art thou my bride?' said he,
'For, North or South, I have never beheld
A lovelier maid than thee.'

'And dost thou love me?' the little maid cried,
'A fine King's son, I wis!'
And the king's son took her with both his hands,
And her ruddy lips did kiss.

And the little maid laughed till the beaded tears,
Ran down in a silver rain.
'O foolish King's son!' and she clapped her hands,
Till the gold rings rang again.

'O King's son, foolish and fooled art thou,
For a goodly game is played:
Thy bride is away with her lover last night,
And I am her little handmaid.'

And the King's son sware a great oath, said he-
Oh, the maiden's heart is merry!
'If the Earl's fair daughter a traitress be,
The little handmaid is enough for me.'
Put on garments of white, my maidens!

The King's son walks in the garden fair-
Oh, the maiden's heart is merry!
And the little handmaiden walketh there,
But the old Earl pulleth his beard for care.
Put on garments of white, my maidens!

Archibald Lampman

The Loons

Once ye were happy, once by many a shore,
Wherever Glooscap's gentle feet might stray,
Lulled by his presence like a dream, ye lay
Floating at rest; but that was long of yore.
He was too good for earthly men; he bore
Their bitter deeds for many a patient day,
And then at last he took his unseen way.
He was your friend, and ye might rest no more:

And now, though many hundred altering years
Have passed, among the desolate northern meres
Still must ye search and wander querulously,
Crying for Glooscap, still bemoan the light
With weird entreaties, and in agony
With awful laughter pierce the lonely night.

Archibald Lampman

The Martyrs

Oh ye, who found in men's brief ways no sign
Of strength or help, so cast them forth, and threw
Your whole souls up to one ye deemed most true,
Nor failed nor doubted but held fast your line,
Seeing before you that divine face shine;
Shall we not mourn, when yours are now so few,
Those sterner days, when all men yearned to you,
White souls whose beauty made their world divine:

Yet still across life's tangled storms we see,
Following the cross, your pale procession led,
One hope, one end, all others sacrificed,
Self-abnegation, love, humility,
Your faces shining toward the bended head,
The wounded hands and patient feet of Christ.

Archibald Lampman

The Meadow

Here when the cloudless April days begin,
And the quaint crows flock thicker day by day,
Filling the forests with a pleasant din,
And the soiled snow creeps secretly away,
Comes the small busy sparrow, primed with glee,
First preacher in the naked wilderness,
Piping an end to all the long distress
From every fence and every leafless tree.

Now with soft slight and viewless artifice
Winter's iron work is wondrously undone;
In all the little hollows cored with ice
The clear brown pools stand simmering in the sun,
Frail lucid worlds, upon whose tremulous floors
All day the wandering water-bugs at will,
Shy mariners whose oars are never still,
Voyage and dream about the heightening shores.

The bluebird, peeping from the gnarled thorn,
Prattles upon his frolic flute, or flings,
In bounding flight across the golden morn,
An azure gleam from off his splendid wings.
Here the slim-pinioned swallows sweep and pass
Down to the far-off river; the black crow
With wise and wary visage to and fro
Settles and stalks about the withered grass.

Here, when the murmurous May-day is half gone,
The watchful lark before my feet takes flight,
And wheeling to some lonelier field far on,
Drops with obstreperous cry; and here at night,
When the first star precedes the great red moon,
The shore-lark tinkles from the darkening field,
Somewhere, we know not, in the dusk concealed,
His little creakling and continuous tune.

Here, too, the robins, lusty as of old,
Hunt the waste grass for forage, or prolong
From every quarter of these fields the bold,
Blithe phrases of their never-finished song.
The white-throat's distant descant with slow stress
Note after note upon the noonday falls,
Filling the leisured air at intervals
With his own mood of piercing pensiveness.

How often from this windy upland perch,
Mine eyes have seen the forest break in bloom,
The rose-red maple and the golden birch,
The dusty yellow of the elms, the gloom
Of the tall poplar hung with tasseled black;
Ah, I have watched, till eye and ear and brain
Grew full of dreams as they, the moted plain,

The sun-steeped wood, the marsh-land at its back,

The valley where the river wheels and fills,
Yon city glimmering in its smoky shroud,
And out at the last misty rim the hills
Blue and far off and mounded like a cloud,
And here the noisy rutted road that goes
Down the slope yonder, flanked on either side
With the smooth-furrowed fields flung black and wide,
Patched with pale water sleeping in the rows.

So as I watched the crowded leaves expand,
The bloom break sheath, the summer's strength uprear,
In earth's great mother's heart already planned
The heaped and burgeoned plenty of the year,
Even as she from out her wintry cell
My spirit also sprang to life anew,
And day by day as the spring's bounty grew,
Its conquering joy possessed me like a spell.

In reverie by day and midnight dream
I sought these upland fields and walked apart,
Musing on Nature, till my thought did seem
To read the very secrets of her heart;
In mooded moments earnest and sublime
I stored the themes of many a future song,
Whose substance should be Nature's, clear and strong,
Bound in a casket of majestic rhyme.

Brave bud-like plans that never reached the fruit,
Like hers our mother's who with every hour,
Easily replenished from the sleepless root,
Covers her bosom with fresh bud and flower;
Yet I was happy as young lovers be,
Who in the season of their passion's birth
Deem that they have their utmost worship's worth,
If love be near them, just to hear and see.

Archibald Lampman

The Monk

I

In Nino's chamber not a sound intrudes
Upon the midnight's tingling silentness,
Where Nino sits before his book and broods,
Thin and brow-burdened with some fine distress,
Some gloom that hangs about his mournful moods
His weary bearing and neglected dress:
So sad he sits, nor ever turns a leaf-
Sorrow's pale miser o'er his hoard of grief.

II

Young Nino and Leonora, they had met
Once at a revel by some lover's chance,
And they were young with hearts already set
To tender thoughts, attuned to romance;
Wherefore it seemed they never could forget
That winning touch, that one bewildering glance:
But found at last a shelter safe and sweet,
Where trembling hearts and longing hands might meet.

III

Ah, sweet their dreams, and sweet, the life they led
With that great love that was their bosoms' all,
Yet ever shadowed by some circling dread
It gloomed at moments deep and tragical,
And so for many a month they seemed to tread
With fluttering hearts, whatever might befall,
Half glad, half sad, their sweet and secret way
To the soft tune of some old lover's lay.

IV

But she is gone, alas he knows not where,
Or how his life that tender gift should lose:
Indeed his love was ever full of care,
The hasty joys and griefs of him who woos,
Where sweet success is neighbour to despair,
With stolen looks and dangerous interviews:
But one long week she came not, nor the next,
And so he wandered here and there perplex;

V

Nor evermore she came. Full many days
He sought her at their trysts, devised deep schemes
To lure her back, and fell on subtle ways
To win some word of her; but all his dreams
Vanished like smoke, and then in sore amaze
From town to town, as one that crazed seems,

He wandered, following in unhappy quest
Uncertain clues that ended like the rest.

VI

And now this midnight, as he sits forlorn,
The printed page for him no meaning bears;
With every word some torturing dream is born;
And every thought is like a step that scares
Old memories up to make him weep and mourn,
He cannot turn but from their latchless lairs,
The weary shadows of his lost delight.
Rise up like dusk birds through the lonely night.

VII

And still with questions vain he probes his grief,
Till thought is wearied out, and dreams grow dim.
What bitter chance, what woe beyond belief
Could keep his lady's heart so hid from him?
Or was her love indeed but light and brief,
A passing thought, a moment's dreamy whim?
Aye there it stings, the woe that never sleeps:
Poor Nino leans upon his book, and weeps.

VIII

Until at length the sudden grief that shook
His pierced bosom like a gust is past,
And laid full weary on the wide-spread book,
His eyes grow dim with slumber light and fast;
But scarcely have his dreams had time to look
On lands of kindlier promise, when aghast
He starts up softly, and in wondering wise
Listens atremble with wide open eyes.

IX

What sound was that? Who knocks like one in dread
With such swift hands upon his outer door?
Perhaps some beggar driven from his bed
By gnawing hunger he can bear no more,
Or questing traveller with confused tread,
Straying, bewildered in the midnight hoar.
Nino uprises, scared, he knows not how,
The dreams still pale about his burdened brow.

X

The heavy bolt he draws, and unawares
A stranger enters with slow steps, unsought,
A long robed monk, and in his hand he bears,

A jewelled goblet curiously wrought;
But of his face beneath the cowl he wears
For all his searching Nino seeth nought;
And slowly past him with long stride he hies,
While Nino follows with bewildered eyes.

XI

Straight on he goes with dusky rustling gown
His steps are soft, his hands are white and fine;
And still he bears the goblet on whose crown
A hundred jewels in the lamplight shine;
And ever from its edges dripping down
Falls with dark stain the rich and lustrous wine,
Wherefrom through all the chamber's shadowy deeps
A deadly perfume like a vapour creeps.

XII

And now he sets it down with careful hands
On the slim table's polished ebony;
And for a space as if in dreams he stands,
Close hidden in his sombre drapery.
'Oh lover, by thy lady's last commands,
I bid thee hearken, for I bear with me
A gift to give thee and a tale to tell
From her who loved thee, while she lived too well.'

XIII

The stranger's voice falls slow and solemnly.
Tis soft, and rich, and wondrous deep of tone;
And Nino's face grows white as ivory,
Listening fast-rooted like a shape of stone.
Ah, blessed saints, can such a dark thing be?
And was it death, and is Leonora gone?
Oh, love is harsh, and life is frail indeed,
That gives men joy, and then so makes them bleed.

XIV

'There is the gift I bring'; the stranger's head
Turns to the cup that glitters at his side;
'And now my tongue draws back for very dread,
Unhappy youth, from what it must not hide.
The saddest tale that ever lips have said;
Yet thou must know how sweet Lenora died,
A broken martyr for love's weary sake,
And left this gift for thee to leave or take.'

XV

Poor Nino listens with that marble face,
And eyes that move not, strangely wide and set.
The monk continues with his mournful grace:
'She told me, Nino, how you often met
In secret, and your plighted loves kept pace,
Together, tangled in the self-same net;
Your dream's dark danger and its dread you knew,
And still you met, and still your passion grew.

XVI

'And aye with that luxurious fire you fed
Your dangerous longing daily, crumb by crumb;
Nor ever cared that still above your head
The shadow grew; for that your lips were dumb.
You knew full keenly you could never wed:
'Twas all a dream: the end must surely come;
For not on thee her father's eyes were turned
To find a son, when mighty lords were spurned.

XVII

'Thou knowest that new-sprung prince, that proud up-start,
Pisa's new tyrant with his armed thralls,
Who bends of late to take the people's part,
Yet plays the king among his marble halls,
Whose gloomy palace in our city's heart,
Frowns like a fortress with its loop-holed walls.
'Twas him he sought for fair Leonora's hand,
That so his own declining house might stand.

XVIII

'The end came soon; 'twas never known to thee;
But, when your love was scarce a six months old,
She sat one day beside her father's knee,
And in her ears the dreadful thing was told.
Within one month her bridal hour should be
With Messer Gianni for his power and gold;
And as she sat with whitened lips the while,
The old man kissed her, with his crafty smile.

XIX

'Poor pallid lady, all the woe she felt
Thou, wretched Nino, thou alone canst know,
Down at his feet with many a moan she knelt,
And prayed that he would never wound her so.
Ah, tender saints! it was a sight to melt
The flintiest heart; but his could never glow.
He sat with clenched hands and straightened head,
And frowned, and glared, and turned from white to red.

XX

'And still with cries about his knees she clung,
Her tender bosom broken with her care.
His words were brief, with bitter fury flung:
'The father's will the child must meekly bear;
I am thy father, thou a girl and young.'
Then to her feet she rose in her despair,
And cried with tightened lips and eyes aglow,
One daring word, a straight and simple, 'No!'

XXI

'Her father left her with wild words, and sent
Rough men, who dragged her to a dungeon deep,
Where many a weary soul in darkness pent
For many a year had watched the slow days creep,
And there he left her for his dark intent,
Where madness breeds and sorrows never sleep.
Coarse robes he gave her, and her lips he fed
With bitter water and a crust of bread.

XXII

'And day by day still following out his plan,
He came to her, and with determined spite
Strove with soft words and then with curse and ban
To bend her heart so wearied to his might,
And aye she bode his bitter pleasure's span,
As one that hears, but hath not sense or sight.
Ah, Nino, still her breaking heart held true:
Poor lady sad, she had no thought but you.

XXIII

'The father tired at last and came no more,
But in his settled anger bade prepare
The marriage feast with all luxurious store,
With pomps and shows and splendors rich and rare;
And so in toil another fortnight wore,
Nor knew she aught what things were in the air,
Till came the old lord's message brief and coarse:
Within three days she should be wed by force.

XXIV

'And all that noon and weary night she lay,
Poor child, like death upon her prison stone,
And none that came to her but crept away,
Sickened at heart to see her lips so moan,
Her eyes so dim within their sockets grey,

Her tender cheeks so thin and ghastly grown;
But when the next morn's light began to stir,
She sent and prayed that I might be with her.

XXV

'This boon he gave: perchance he deemed that I,
The chaplain of his house, her childhood's friend,
With patient tones and holy words, might try
To soothe her purpose to his gainful end.
I bowed full low before his crafty eye,
But knew my heart had no base help to lend.
That night with many a silent prayer I came
To poor Leonora in her grief and shame.

XXVI

'But she was strange to me: I could not speak
For glad amazement, mixed with some dark fear;
I saw her stand no longer pale and weak,
But a proud maiden, queenly and most clear,
With flashing eyes and vermeil in her cheek:
And on the little table, set anear,
I marked two goblets of rare workmanship
With some strange liquor crowned to the lip.

XXVII

'And then she ran to me and caught my hand,
Tightly imprisoned in her meagre twain,
And like the ghost of sorrow she did stand,
And eyed me softly with a liquid pain:
'Oh father, grant, I pray thee, I command,
One boon to me, I'll never ask again,
One boon to me and to my love, to both;
Dear father, grant, and bind it with an oath.'

XXVIII

'This granted I, and then with many a wail
She told me all the story of your woe,
And when she finished, lightly but most pale,
To those two brimming goblets she did go,
And one she took within her fingers frail,
And looked down smiling in its crimson glow:
'And now thine oath I'll tell; God grant to thee
No rest in grave, if thou be false to me.

XXIX

"Alas, poor me! whom cruel hearts would wed
On the sad morrow to that wicked lord;

But I'll not go; nay, rather I'll be dead,
Safe from their frown and from their bitter word.
Without my Nino life indeed were sped;
And sith we two can never more accord
In this drear world, so weary and perplex,
We'll die, and win sweet pleasure in the next.

XXX

"Oh father, God will never give thee rest,
If thou be false to what thy lips have sworn,
And false to love, and false to me distressed,
A helpless maid, so broken and outworn.
This cup-she put it softly to her breast-
I pray thee carry, ere the morrow morn,
To Nino's hand, and tell him all my pain;
This other with mine own lips I will drain.'

XXXI

'Slowly she raised it to her lips, the while
I darted forward, madly fain to seize
Her dreadful hands, but with a sudden wile
She twisted and sprang from me with bent knees,
And rising turned upon me with a smile,
And drained her goblet to the very lees.
'Oh priest, remember, keep thine oath,' she cried,
And the spent goblet fell against her side.

XXXII

'And then she moaned and murmured like a bell:
'My Nino, my sweet Nino!' and no more
She said, but fluttered like a bird and fell
Lifeless as marble to the footworn floor;
And there she lies even now in lonely cell,
Poor lady, pale with all the grief she bore,
She could not live, and still be true to thee,
And so she's gone where no rude hands can be.'

XXXIII

The monk's voice pauses like some mournful flute,
Whose pondered closes for sheer sorrow fail,
And then with hand that seems as it would suit
A soft girl best, it is so light and frail,
He turns half round, and for a moment mute
Points to the goblet, and so ends his tale:
'Mine oath is kept, thy lady's last command;
'Tis but a short hour since it left her hand.'

XXXIV

So ends the stranger: surely no man's tongue
Was e'er so soft, or half so sweet, as his.
Oft as he listened, Nino's heart had sprung
With sudden start as from a spectre's kiss;
For deep in many a word he deemed had rung
The liquid fall of some loved emphasis;
And so it pierced his sorrow to the core,
The ghost of tones that he should hear no more.

XXXV

But now the tale is ended, and still keeps
The stranger hidden in dusky weed;
And Nino stands, wide-eyed, as one that sleeps,
And dimly wonders how his heart doth bleed.
Anon he bends, yet neither moans nor weeps,
But hangs atremble, like a broken reed;
'Ah! bitter fate, that lured and sold us so,
Poor lady mine; alas for all our woe!'

XXXVI

But even as he moans in such dark mood,
His wandering eyes upon the goblet fall.
Oh, dreaming heart! Oh, strange ingratitude!
So to forget his lady's lingering call,
Her parting gift, so rich, so crimson-hued,
The lover's draught, that shall be cure for all.
He lifts the goblet lightly from its place,
And smiles, and rears it with his courtly grace.

XXXVII

'Oh, lady sweet, I shall not long delay:
This gift of thine shall bring me to thine eyes.
Sure God will send on no unpardoned way
The faithful soul, that at such bidding dies.
When thou art gone, I cannot longer stay
To brave this world with all its wrath and lies,
Where hands of stone and tongues of dragon's breath
Have bruised mine angel to her piteous death.'

XXXVIII

And now the gleaming goblet hath scarce dyed
His lips' thin pallor with its deathly red,
When Nino starts in wonder, fearful-eyed,
For, lo! the stranger with outstretched head
Springs at his face one soft and sudden stride,
And from his hand the deadly cup hath sped,
Dashed to the ground, and all its seeded store

Runs out like blood upon the marble floor.

XXXIX

'Oh, Nino, my sweet Nino! speak to me,
Nor stand so strange, nor look so deathly pale.
'Twas all to prove thy heart's dear constancy
I brought that cup and told that piteous tale.
Ah! chains and cells and cruel treachery
Are weak indeed when women's hearts assail.
Art angry, Nino?' 'Tis no monk that cries,
But sweet Leonora with her love-lit eyes.

XL

She dashes from her brow the pented hood;
The dusky robe falls rustling to her feet;
And there she stands, as aye in dreams she stood.
Ah, Nino, see! Sure man did never meet
So warm a flower from such a sombre bud,
So trembling fair, so wan, so pallid sweet.
Aye, Nino, down like saint upon thy knee,
And soothe her hands with kisses warm and free.

XLI

And now with broken laughter on her lips,
And now with moans remembering of her care,
She weeps, and smiles, and like a child she slips
Her lily fingers through his curly hair,
The while her head with all it's sweet she dips,
Close to his ear, to soothe and murmur there;
'Oh, Nino, I was hid so long from thee,
That much I doubted what thy love might be.

XLII

'And though 'twas cruel hard of me to try
Thy faithful heart with such a fearful test,
Yet now thou canst be happy, sweet, as I
Am wondrous happy in thy truth confessed.
To haggard death indeed thou needst not fly
To find the softness of thy lady's breast;
For such a gift was never death's to give,
But thou shalt have me for thy love, and live.

XLIII

'Dost see these cheeks, my Nino? they're so thin,
Not round and soft, as when thou touched them last:
So long with bitter rage they pent me in,
Like some poor thief in lonely dungeons cast;

Only this night through every bolt and gin
By cunning stealth I wrought my way at last.
Straight to thine heart I fled, unfaltering,
Like homeward pigeon with uncaged wing.

XLIV

'Nay, Nino, kneel not; let me hear thee speak.
We must not tarry long; the dawn is nigh.'
So rises he, for very gladness weak;
But half in fear that yet the dream may fly,
He touches mutely mouth and brow and cheek;
Till in his ear she 'gins to plead and sigh:
'Dear love, forgive me for that cruel tale,
That stung thine heart and made thy lips so pale.'

XLV

And so he folds her softly with quick sighs,
And both with murmurs warm and musical
Talk and retalk, with dim or smiling eyes,
Of old delights and sweeter days to fall:
And yet not long, for, ere the starlit skies,
Grow pale above the city's eastern wall,
They rise, with lips and happy hands withdrawn,
And pass out softly into the dawn.

XLVI

For Nino knows the captain of a ship,
The friend of many journeys, who may be
This very morn will let his cables slip
For the warm coast of Sicily.
There in Palermo, at the harbour's lip,
A brother lives, of tried fidelity:
So to the quays by hidden ways they wend
In the pale morn, nor do they miss their friend.

XLVII

And ere the shadow off another night
Hath darkened Pisa, many a foe shall stray
Through Nino's home, with eyes malignly bright
In wolfish quest, but shall not find his prey:
The while those lovers in their white-winged flight
Shall see far out upon the twilight grey,
Behind, the glimmer of the sea, before,
The dusky outlines of a kindlier shore.

Archibald Lampman

The Moon-Path

The full, clear moon uprose and spread
Her cold, pale splendor o'er the sea;
A light-strewn path that seemed to lead
Outward into eternity.
Between the darkness and the gleam
An old-world spell encompassed me:
Methought that in a godlike dream
I trod upon the sea.

And lo! upon that glimmering road,
In shining companies unfurled,
The trains of many a primal god,
The monsters of the elder world;
Strange creatures that, with silver wings,
Scarce touched the ocean's thronging floor,
The phantoms of old tales, and things
Whose shapes are known no more.

Giants and demi-gods who once
Were dwellers of the earth and sea,
And they who from Deucalion's stones,
Rose men without an infancy;
Beings on whose majestic lids
Time's solemn secrets seemed to dwell,
Tritons and pale-limbed Nereids,
And forms of heaven and hell.

Some who were heroes long of yore,
When the great world was hale and young;
And some whose marble lips yet pour
The murmur of an antique tongue;
Sad queens, whose names are like soft moans,
Whose griefs were written up in gold;
And some who on their silver thrones
Were goddesses of old.

As if I had been dead indeed,
And come into some after-land,
I saw them pass me, and take heed,
And touch me with each mighty hand;
And evermore a murmurous stream,
So beautiful they seemed to me,
Not less than in a godlike dream
I trod the shining sea.

Archibald Lampman

The Mystery Of A Year

A little while, a year ago,
I knew her for a romping child,
A dimple and a glance that shone
With idle mischief when she smiled.

To-day she passed me in the press,
And turning with a quick surprise
I wondered at her stateliness,
I wondered at her altered eyes.

To me the street was just the same,
The people and the city's stir;
But life had kindled into flame,
And all the world was changed for her.

I watched her in the crowded ways,
A noble form, a queenly head,
With all the woman in her gaze,
The conscious woman in her tread.

Archibald Lampman

The Organist

In his dim chapel day by day
The organist was wont to play,
And please himself with fluted reveries;
And all the spirit's joy and strife,
The longing of a tender life,
Took sound and form upon the ivory keys;
And though he seldom spoke a word,
The simple hearts that loved him heard
His glowing soul in these.

One day as he wrapped, a sound
Of feet stole near; he turned and found
A little maid that stood beside him there.
She started, and in shrinking-wise
Besought him with her liquid eyes
And little features, very sweet and spare.
'You love the music, child,' he said,
And laid his hand upon her head,
And smoothed her matted hair.

She answered, 'At the door one day
I sat and heard the organ play;
I did not dare to come inside for fear;
But yesterday, a little while,
I crept half up the empty aisle
And heard the music sounding sweet and clear;
To-day I thought you would not mind,
For, master dear, your face was kind,
And so I came up here.'

'You love the music then,' he said,
And still he stroked her golden head,
And followed out some winding reverie;
'And you are poor?' said he at last;
The maiden nodded, and he passed
His hand across his forehead dreamingly;
'And will you be my friend?' he spake,
'And on the organ learn to make
Grand music here with me?'

And all the little maiden's face
Was kindled with a grateful grace;
'Oh, master, teach me; I will slave for thee!'
She cried; and so the child grew dear
To him, and slowly year by year
He taught her all the organ's majesty;
And gave her from his slender store
Bread and warm clothing, that no more
Her cheeks were pinched to see.

And year by year the maiden grew
Taller and lovelier, and the hue

Deepened upon her tender cheeks untried.
Rounder, and queenlier, and more fair
Her form grew, and her golden hair
Fell yearly richer at the master's side.
In speech and bearing, form and face,
Sweeter and graver, grace by grace,
Her beauties multiplied.

And sometimes at his work a glow
Would touch him, and he murmured low
'How beautiful she is?' and bent his head;
And sometimes when the day went by
And brought no maiden he would sigh,
And lean and listen to her velvet tread;
And he would drop his hands and say,
'My music cometh not to-day;
Pray God she be not dead!'

So the sweet maiden filled his heart,
And with her growing grew his art,
For day by day more wondrously he played.
Such heavenly things the master wrought,
That in his happy dreams he thought,
The organ's self did love the gold-haired maid:
But she, the maiden, never guessed—
What prayers for her in hours of rest
The sombre organ prayed.

At last, one summer morning fair,
The maiden came with braided hair,
And took his hands, and held them eagerly.
'To-morrow is my wedding day;
Dear master, bless me that the way
Of life be smooth, not bitter unto me.'
He stirred not; but the light did go
Out of his shrunken cheeks, and oh!
His head hung heavily.

'You love him, then?' 'I love him well,'
She answered, and a numbness fell
Upon his eyes and all his heart that bled.
A glory, half a smile, abode
Within the maiden's eyes and glowed
Upon her parted lips. The master said,
'God bless and bless thee, little maid,
With peace and long delight,' and laid
His hands upon her head.

And she was gone; and all that day
The hours crept up and slipped away,
And he sat still, as moveless as a stone.
The night came down, with quiet stars,

And darkened him: in coloured bars
Along the shadowy aisle the moonlight shone.
And then the master woke and passed
His hands across the keys at last,
And made the organ moan.

The organ shook, the music wept;
For sometimes like a wail it crept
In broken moanings down the shadows drear;
And otherwhiles the sound did swell,
And like a sudden tempest fell
Through all the windows wonderful and clear.
The people gathered from the street,
And filled the chapel seat by seat-
They could not choose but hear.

And there they sat till dawning light,
Nor ever stirred to awe. 'To-night,
The master hath a noble mood,' they said.
But on a sudden ceased the sound:
Like ghosts the people gathered round,
And on the keys they found his fallen head.
The silent organ had received
The master's broken heart relieved,
And he was white and dead.

Archibald Lampman

The Poets

Half god, half brute, within the self-same shell,
Changers with every hour from dawn till even,
Who dream with angels in the gate of heaven,
And skirt with curious eyes the brinks of hell,
Children of Pan, whom some, the few, love well,
But most draw back, and know not what to say,
Poor shining angels, whom the hoofs betray,
Whose pinions frighten with their goatish smell.

Half brutish, half divine, but all of earth,
Half-way 'twixt hell and heaven, near to man,
The whole world's tangle gathered in one span,
Full of this human torture and this mirth:
Life with its hope and error, toil and bliss,
Earth-born, earth-reared, ye know it as it is.

Archibald Lampman

The Poet's Possession

Think not, oh master of the well-tilled field,
This earth is only thine; for after thee,
When all is sown and gathered and put by,
Comes the grave poet with creative eye,
And from these silent acres and clean plots,
Bids with his wand the fancied after-yield,
A second tilth and second harvest, be,
The crop of images and curious thoughts.

Archibald Lampman

The Poet's Song

I

There came no change from week to week
On all the land, but all one way,
Like ghosts that cannot touch nor speak,
Day followed day.

Within the palace court the rounds
Of glare and shadow, day and night,
Went ever with the same dull sounds,
The same dull flight:

The motion of slow forms of state,
The far-off murmur of the street,
The din of couriers at the gate,
Half-mad with heat;

Sometimes a distant shout of boys
At play upon the terrace walk,
The shutting of great doors, and noise
Of muttered talk.

In one red corner of the wall,
That fronted with its granite stain
The town, the palms, and, beyond all,
The burning plain,

As listless as the hour, alone,
The poet by his broken lute
Sat like a figure in the stone,
Dark-browed and mute.

He saw the heat on the thin grass
Fall till it withered joint by joint,
The shadow on the dial pass
From point to point.

He saw the midnight bright and bare
Fill with its quietude of stars
The silence that no human prayer
Attains or mars.

He heard the hours divide, and still
The sentry on the outer wall
Make the night wearier with his shrill
Monotonous call.

He watched the lizard where it lay,
Impassive as the watcher's face;
And only once in the long day
It changed its place.

Sometimes with clank of hoofs and cries
The noon through all its trance was stirred;
The poet sat with half-shut eyes,
Nor saw, nor heard.

And once across the heated close
Light laughter in a silver shower
Fell from fair lips: the poet rose
And cursed the hour.

Men paled and sickened; half in fear,
There came to him at dusk of eve
One who but murmured in his ear
And plucked his sleeve:

'The king is filled with irks, distressed,
And bids thee hasten to his side;
For thou alone canst give him rest.'
The poet cried:

'Go, show the king this broken lute!
Even as it is, so am I!
The tree is perished to its root,
The fountain dry.

'What seeks he of the leafless tree,
The broken lute, the empty spring?
Yea, tho' he give his crown to me,
I cannot sing!'

II

That night there came from either hand
A sense of change upon the land;
A brooding stillness rustled through
With creeping winds that hardly blew;
A shadow from the looming west,
A stir of leaves, a dim unrest;
It seemed as if a spell had broke.

And then the poet turned and woke
As from the darkness of a dream,
And with a smile divine supreme
Drew up his mantle fold on fold,
And strung his lute with strings of gold,
And bound the sandals to his feet,
And strode into the darkling street.

Through crowds of murmuring men he hied,
With working lips and swinging stride,

And gleaming eyes and brow bent down;
Out of the great gate of the town
He hastened ever and passed on,
And ere the darkness came, was gone,
A mote beyond the western swell.

And then the storm arose and fell
From wheeling shadows black with rain
That drowned the hills and strode the plain;
Round the grim mountain-heads it passed,
Down whistling valleys blast on blast,
Surged in upon the snapping trees,
And swept the shuddering villages.

That night, when the fierce hours grew long,
Once more the monarch, old and grey,
Called for the poet and his song,
And called in vain. But far away,
By the wild mountain-gorges, stirred,
The shepherds in their watches heard,
Above the torrent's charge and clang,
The cleaving chant of one that sang.

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

The Return of the Year

Again the warm bare earth, the noon
That hangs upon her healing scars,
The midnight round, the great red moon,
The mother with her brood of stars,

The mist-rack and the wakening rain
Blown soft in many a forest way,
The yellowing elm-trees, and again
The blood-root in its sheath of gray.

The vesper-sparrow's song, the stress
Of yearning notes that gush and stream,
The lyric joy, the tenderness,
And once again the dream! the dream!

A touch of far-off joy and power,
A something it is life to learn,
Comes back to earth, and one short hour
The glammers of the gods return.

This life's old mood and cult of care
Falls smitten by an older truth,
And the gray world wins back to her
The rapture of her vanished youth.

Dead thoughts revive, and he that heeds
Shall hear, as by a spirit led,
A song among the golden reeds:
'The gods are vanished but not dead!'

For one short hour, unseen yet near,
They haunt us, a forgotten mood,
A glory upon mead and mere,
A magic in the leafless wood.

At morning we shall catch the glow
Of Dian's quiver on the hill,
And somewhere in the glades I know
That Pan is at his piping still.

Archibald Lampman

The Song Of Pan

Mad with love and laden
With immortal pain,
Pan pursued a maiden--
Pan, the god--in vain.

For when Pan had nearly
Touched her, wild to plead,
She was gone--and clearly
In her place a reed!

Long the god, unwitting,
Through the valley strayed;
Then at last, submitting,
Cut the reed, and made,

Deftly fashioned, seven
Pipes, and poured his pain
Unto earth and heaven
In a piercing strain.

So with god and poet;
Beauty lures them on,
Flies, and ere they know it
Like a wraith is gone.

Then they seek to borrow
Pleasure still from wrong,
And with smiling sorrow
Turn it to a song.

Archibald Lampman

The Song Sparrow

Fair little scout, that when the iron year
Changes, and the first fleecy clouds deploy,
Comest with such a sudden burst of joy,
Lifting on winter's doomed and broken rear
That song of silvery triumph blithe and clear;
Not yet quite conscious of the happy glow,
We hungered for some surer touch, and lo!
One morning we awake, and thou art here.
And thousands of frail-stemmed hepaticas,
With their crisp leaves and pure and perfect hues,
Light sleepers, ready for the golden news,
Spring at thy note beside the forest ways--
Next to thy song, the first to deck the hour--
The classic lyrist and the classic flower.

Archibald Lampman

The Sun Cup

The earth is the cup of the sun,
That he filleth at morning with wine,
With the warm, strong wine of his might
From the vintage of gold and of light,
Fills it, and makes it divine.

And at night when his journey is done,
At the gate of his radiant hall,
He setteth his lips to the brim,
With a long last look of his eye,
And lifts it and draineth it dry,
Drains till he leaveth it all
Empty and hollow and dim.

And then, as he passes to sleep,
Still full of the feats that he did,
Long ago in Olympian wars,
He closes it down with the sweep
Of its slow-turning luminous lid,
Its cover of darkness and stars,
Wrought once by Hephaestus of old
With violet and vastness and gold.

Archibald Lampman

The Sweetness of Life

It fell on a day I was happy,
And the winds, the concave sky,
The flowers and the beasts in the meadow
Seemed happy even as I;
And I stretched my hands to the meadow,
To the bird, the beast, the tree:
'Why are ye all so happy?'
I cried, and they answered me.

What sayest thou, Oh meadow,
That stretchest so wide, so far,
That none can say how many
Thy misty marguerites are?
And what say ye, red roses,
That o'er the sun-blanced wall
From your high black-shadowed trellis
Like flame or blood-drops fall?
'We are born, we are reared, and we linger
A various space and die;
We dream, and are bright and happy,
But we cannot answer why.'

What sayest thou, Oh shadow,
That from the dreaming hill
All down the broadening valley
Liest so sharp and still?
And thou, Oh murmuring brooklet,
Whereby in the noonday gleam
The loosestrife burns like ruby,
And the branched asters dream?
'We are born, we are reared, and we linger
A various space and die;
We dream and are very happy,
But we cannot answer why.'

And then of myself I questioned,
That like a ghost the while
Stood from me and calmly answered,
With slow and curious smile:
'Thou art born as the flowers, and wilt linger
Thine own short space and die;
Thou dream'st and art strangely happy,
But thou canst not answer why.'

Archibald Lampman

The Three Pilgrims

In days, when the fruit of men's labour was sparing,
And hearts were weary and nigh to break,
A sweet grave man with a beautiful bearing
Came to us once in the fields and spake.

He told us of Roma, the marvellous city,
And of One that came from the living God,
The Virgin's Son, who in heavenly pity,
Bore for his people the rood and rod,

And how at Roma the gods were broken,
The new was strong, and the old nigh dead,
And love was more than a bare word spoken,
For the sick were healed and the poor were fed;

And we sat mute at his feet, and hearkened:
The grave men came in an hour and went,
But a new light shone on a land long darkened;
The toil was weary, the fruit was spent:

So we came south, till we saw the city,
Speeding three of us, hand in hand,
Seeking peace and the bread of pity,
Journeying out of the Umbrian land;

Till we saw from the hills in a dazzled coma
Over the vines that the wind made shiver,
Tower on tower, the great city Roma,
Palace and temple, and winding river:

And we stood long in a dream and waited,
Watching and praying and purified,
And came at last to the walls belated,
Entering in at the eventide:

And many met us with song and dancing,
Mantled in skins and crowned with flowers,
Waving goblets and torches glancing,
Faces drunken, and grinned in ours:

And one, that ran in the midst, came near us-
'Crown yourselves for the feast,' he said,
But we cried out, that the God might hear us,
'Where is Jesus, the living bread?'

And they took us each by the hand with laughter;
Their eyes were haggard and red with wine:
They haled us on, and we followed after,
'We will show you the new God's shrine.'

Ah, woe to out tongues, that, forever unsleeping,
Harp and uncover the old hot care,

The soothing ash from the embers sweeping,
Wherever the soles of our sad feet fare.

Ah, we were simple of mind, now knowing,
How dreadful the heart of a man might be;
But the knowledge of evil is mighty of growing;
Only the deaf and the blind are free.

We came to a garden of beauty and pleasure-
It was not the way that our own feet choose-
Where a revel was whirling in many a measure,
And the myriad roar of a great crowd rose;

And the midmost round of the garden was reddened
With pillars of fire in a great high ring-
One look-and our souls forever were deadened,
Though our feet yet move, and our dreams yet sting;

For we saw that each was a live man flaming,
Limbs that a human mother bore,
And a thing of horror was done, past naming,
And the crowd spun round, and we saw no more.

And he that ran in the midst, descrying,
Lifted his hand with a foul red sneer,
And smote us each and the other, crying,
'Thus we worship the new God here.

'The Caesar comes, and the peoples paeans
Hail his name for the new made light,
Pitch and the flesh of the Galileans,
Torches fit for a Roman night;'

And we fell down to the earth, and sickened,
Moaning, three of us, head by head,
'Where is He, whom the good God quickened?
Where is Jesus, the living bread?'

Yet ever we heard, in the foul mirth turning,
Man and woman and child go by,
And ever the yells of the charred men burning,
Piercing heavenward, cry on cry:

And we lay there, till the frightful revel,
Died in the dawn with a few short moans,
Of some that knelt in the wan and level
Shadows, that fell from the blackened bones.

Numb with horror and sick with pity,
The heart of each as an iron weight,
We crept in the dawn from the awful city,
Journeying out of the seaward gate.

The great sun came from the sea before us;
A soft wind blew from the scented south;
But our eyes knew not of the steps that bore us
Down to the ships at the Timber's mouth;

And we prayed then, as we turned our faces
Over the sea to the living God,
That our ways might be in the fierce bare places,
Where never the foot of a live man trod:

And we set sail in the noon, not caring
Whether the prow of the dark ship came,
No more over the old ways faring;
For the sea was cold, but the land was flame:

And the keen ship sped, and a deadly coma
Blotted away from our eyes forever,
Tower on tower, the great city Roma,
Palace and temple and yellow river.

Archibald Lampman

The Truth

Friend, though thy soul should burn thee, yet be still
Thoughts were not meant for strife, nor tongues for swords,
He that sees clear is gentlest of his words,
And that's not truth that hath the heart to kill.
The whole world's thought shall not one truth fulfil.
Dull in our age, and passionate in youth,
No mind of man hath found the perfect truth,
Nor shalt thou find it; therefore, friend, be still.

Watch and be still, nor hearken to the fool,
The babbler of consistency and rule:
Wisest is he, who, never quite secure,
Changes his thoughts for better day by day:
To-morrow some new light will shine, be sure,
And thou shalt see thy thought another way.

Archibald Lampman

The Weaver

All day, all day, round the clacking net
The weaver's fingers fly:
Gray dreams like frozen mists are set
In the hush of the weaver's eye;
A voice from the dusk is calling yet,
'Oh, come away, or we die!'

Without is a horror of hosts that fight,
That rest not, and cease not to kill,
The thunder of feet and the cry of the flight,
A slaughter weird and shrill;
Gray dreams are set in the weaver's sight,
The weaver is weaving still.

'Come away, dear soul, come away or we die;
Hear'st thou the moan and the rush! Come away;
The people are slain at the gates, and they fly;
The kind God hath left them this day;
The battle-axes cleaves, and the foemen cry,
And the red swords swing and slay.'

'Nay, wife, what boots to fly from pain,
When pain is wherever we fly?
And death is a sweeter thing than a chain:
'Tis sweeter to sleep than to cry,
The kind God giveth the days that wane;
If the kind God hath said it, I die.'

And the weaver wove, and the good wife fled,
And the city was made a tomb,
And a flame that shook from the rocks overhead
Shone into that silent room,
And touched like a wide red kiss on the dead
Brown weaver slain by his loom.

Yet I think that in some dim shadowy land,
Where no suns rise or set,
Where the ghost of a whilom loom doth stand
Round the dusk of its silken net,
Forever flyeth his shadowy hand,
And the weaver is weaving yet.

Archibald Lampman

The Woodcutter's Hut

Far up in the wild and wintery hills in the heart of the cliff-broken woods,
Where the mounded drifts lie soft and deep in the noiseless solitudes,
The hut of the lonely woodcutter stands, a few rough beams that show
A blunted peak and a low black line, from the glittering waste of snow.
In the frost-still dawn from his roof goes up in the windless,
motionless air,
The thin, pink curl of leisurely smoke; through the forest white and bare
The woodcutter follows his narrow trail, and the morning rings and cracks
With the rhythmic jet of his sharp-blown breath and the echoing shout of his axe.
Only the waft of the wind besides, or the stir of some hardy bird--
The call of the friendly chickadee, or the pat of the nuthatch--is heard;
Or a rustle comes from a dusky clump, where the busy siskins feed,
And scatter the dimpled sheet of the snow with the shells of the cedar-seed.
Day after day the woodcutter toils untiring with axe and wedge,
Till the jingling teams come up from the road that runs by the valley's edge,
With plunging of horses, and hurling of snow, and many a shouted word,
And carry away the keen-scented fruit of his cutting, cord upon cord.
Not the sound of a living foot comes else, not a moving visitant there,
Save the delicate step of some halting doe, or the sniff of a prowling bear.
And only the stars are above him at night, and the trees that creak and groan,
And the frozen, hard-swept mountain-crests with their silent fronts of stone,
As he watches the sinking glow of his fire and the wavering flames upcaught,
Cleaning his rifle or mending his moccasins, sleepy and slow of thought.
Or when the fierce snow comes, with the rising wind, from the grey north-east,
He lies through the leaguering hours in his bunk like a winter-hidden beast,
Or sits on the hard-packed earth, and smokes by his draught-blown guttering fire,
Without thought or remembrance, hardly awake, and waits for the storm to tire.
Scarcely he hears from the rock-rimmed heights to the wild ravines below,
Near and far-off, the limitless wings of the tempest hurl and go
In roaring gusts that plunge through the cracking forest, and lull, and lift,
All day without stint and all night long with the sweep of the hissing drift.
But winter shall pass ere long with its hills of snow and its fettered dreams,

And the forest shall glimmer with living gold, and chime with the
gushing of streams;
Millions of little points of plants shall prick through its matted
floor,
And the wind-flower lift and uncurl her silken buds by the woodman's
door;
The sparrow shall see and exult; but lo! as the spring draws gaily on,
The woodcutter's hut is empty and bare, and the master that made it is
gone.
He is gone where the gathering of valley men another labour yields,
To handle the plough, and the harrow, and scythe, in the heat of the
summer fields.
He is gone with his corded arms, and his ruddy face, and his moccasined
feet,
The animal man in his warmth and vigour, sound, and hard, and complete.
And all summer long, round the lonely hut, the black earth burgeons and
breeds,
Till the spaces are filled with the tall-plumed ferns and the triumphing
forest-weeds;
The thick wild raspberries hem its walls, and, stretching on either
hand,
The red-ribbed stems and the giant-leaves of the sovereign spikenard
stand.
So lonely and silent it is, so withered and warped with the sun and
snow,
You would think it the fruit of some dead man's toil a hundred years
ago;
And he who finds it suddenly there, as he wanders far and alone,
Is touched with a sweet and beautiful sense of something tender and
gone,
The sense of a struggling life in the waste, and the mark of a soul's
command,
The going and coming of vanished feet, the touch of a human hand.

Archibald Lampman

Three Flower Petals

When saw I yesterday walking apart
In a leafy place where the cattle wait?
Something to keep for a charm in my heart-
A little sweet girl in a garden gate.
Laughing she lay in the gold sun's might,
And held for a target to shelter her,
In her little soft fingers, round and white,
The gold-rimmed face of a sunflower.

Laughing she lay on the stone that stands
For a rough-hewn step in that sunny place,
And her yellow hair hung down to her hands,
Shadowing over her dimpled face.
Her eyes like the blue of the sky, made dim
With the might of the sun that looked at her,
Shone laughing over the serried rim,
Golden set, of the sunflower.

Laughing, for token she gave to me
Three petals out of the sunflower;-
When the petals are withered and gone, shall be
Three verses of mine for praise of her,
That a tender dream of her face may rise
And lighten me yet in another hour,
Of her sunny hair and her beautiful eyes,
Laughing over the golden sunflower.

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 My Daughter

O little one, daughter, my dearest,
With your smiles and your beautiful curls,
And your laughter, the brightest and clearest,
O gravest and gayest of girls;

With your hands that are softer than roses,
And your lips that are lighter than flowers,
And that innocent brow that discloses
A wisdom more lovely than ours;

With your locks that encumber, or scatter
In a thousand mercurial gleams,
And those feet whose impetuous patter
I hear and remember in dreams;

With your manner of motherly duty,
When you play with your dolls and are wise;
With your wonders of speech, and the beauty
In your little imperious eyes;

When I hear you so silverly ringing
Your welcome from chamber or stair.
When you run to me, kissing and clinging,
So radiant, so rosily fair;

I bend like an ogre above you;
I bury my face in your curls;
I fold you, I clasp you, I love you.
O baby, queen-blossom of girls!

Archibald Lampman

To my Mother

Mother, to whose valiant will
Battling long ago,
What the heaping years fulfil,
Light and song, I owe;
Send my little book afield,
Fronting praise or blame
With the shining flag and shield
Of your name.

Archibald Lampman

To My Wife

Though fancy and the might of rhyme,
That turneth like the tide,
Have borne me many a musing time,
Beloved, from thy side.

Ah yet, I pray thee, deem not, Sweet,
Those hours were given in vain;
Within these covers to thy feet
I bring them back again.

Archibald Lampman

To The Cricket

Didst thou not tease and fret me to and fro,
Sweet spirit of this summer-circled field,
With that quiet voice of thine that would not yield
Its meaning, though I mused and sought it so?
But now I am content to let it go,
To lie at length and watch the swallows pass,
As blithe and restful as this quiet grass,
Content only to listen and to know
That years shall turn, and summers yet shall shine,
And I shall lie beneath these swaying trees,
Still listening thus; haply at last to seize,
And render in some happier verse divine
That friendly, homely, haunting speech of thine,
That perfect utterance of content and ease.

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 shleter 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 thei deep embrace, and bear thee on
In that great bridal journey to the sea.

Archibald Lampman

To The Prophetic Soul

What are these bustlers at the gate
Of now or yesterday,
These playthings in the hand of Fate,
That pass, and point no way;

These clinging bubbles whose mock fires
For ever dance and gleam,
Vain foam that gathers and expires
Upon the world's dark stream;

These gropers betwixt right and wrong,
That seek an unknown goal,
Most ignorant, when they seem most strong;
What are they, then, O Soul,

That thou shouldst covet overmuch
A tenderer range of heart,
And yet at every dreamed-of touch
So tremulously start?

Thou with that hatred ever new
Of the world's base control,
That vision of the large and true,
That quickness of the soul;

Nay, for they are not of thy kind,
But in a rarer clay
God dowered thee with an alien mind;
Thou canst not be as they.

Be strong therefore; resume thy load,
And forward stone by stone
Go singing, though the glorious road
Thou travellest alone.

Archibald Lampman

Unrest

All day upon the garden bright
The sun shines strong,
But in my heart there is no light,
Or any song.

Voices of merry life go by,
A down the street;
But I am weary of the cry
And drift of feet.

With all dear things that ought to please
The hours are blessed,
And yet my soul is ill at ease,
And cannot rest.

Strange spirit, leave me not too long,
Nor stint to give,
For if my soul have no sweet song,
It cannot live.

Archibald Lampman

Viva Perpetua

Now being on the eve of death, discharged
From every mortal hope and earthly care,
I questioned how my soul might best employ
This hand, and this still wakeful flame of mind,
In the brief hours yet left me for their use;
Wherefore have I bethought me of my friend,
Of you, Philarchus, and your company,
Yet wavering in the faith and unconfirmed;
Perchance that I may break into thine heart
Some sorrowful channel for the love divine,
I make this simple record of our proof
In diverse sufferings for the name of Christ,
Whereof the end already for the most
Is death this day with steadfast faith endured.

We were in prison many days, close-pent
In the black lower dungeon, housed with thieves
And murderers and divers evil men;
So foul a pressure, we had almost died,
Even there, in struggle for the breath of life
Amid the stench and unendurable heat;
Nor could we find each other save by voice
Or touch, to know that we were yet alive,
So terrible was the darkness. Yea, 'twas hard
To keep the sacred courage in our hearts,
When all was blind with that unchanging night,
And foul with death, and on our ears the taunts
And ribald curses of the soldiery
Fell mingled with the prisoners' cries, a load
Sharper to bear, more bitter than their blows.
At first, what with that dread of our abode,
Our sudden apprehension, and the threats
Ringing perpetually in our ears, we lost
The living fire of faith, and like poor hinds
Would have denied our Lord and fallen away.
Even Perpetua, whose joyous faith
Was in the later holier days to be
The stay and comfort of our weaker ones,
Was silent for long whiles. Perchance she shrank
In the mere sickness of the flesh, confused
And shaken by our new and horrible plight--
The tender flesh, untempered and untried,
Not quickened yet nor mastered by the soul;
For she was of a fair and delicate make,
Most gently nurtured, to whom stripes and threats
And our foul prison-house were things undreamed.
But little by little as our spirits grew
Inured to suffering, with clasped hands, and tongues
That cheered each other to incessant prayer,
We rose and faced our trouble: we recalled
Our Master's sacred agony and death,
Setting before our eyes the high reward

Of steadfast faith, the martyr's deathless crown.

So passed some days whose length and count we lost,
Our bitterest trial. Then a respite came.
One who had interest with the governor
Wrought our removal daily for some hours
Into an upper chamber, where we sat
And held each other's hands in childish joy,
Receiving the sweet gift of light and air
With wonder and exceeding thankfulness.
And then began that life of daily growth
In mutual exaltation and sweet help
That bore us as a gently widening stream
Unto the ocean of our martyrdom.
Uniting all our feebler souls in one--
A mightier--we reached forth with this to God.

Perpetua had been troubled for her babe,
Robbed of the breast and now these many days
Wasting for want of food; but when that change
Whereof I spake, of light and liberty
Relieved the horror of our prison gloom,
They brought it to her, and she sat apart,
And nursed and tended it, and soon the child
Would not be parted from her arms, but throve
And fattened, and she kept it night and day.
And always at her side with sleepless care
Hovered the young Felicitas--a slight
And spiritual figure--every touch and tone
Charged with premonitory tenderness,
Herself so near to her own motherhood.
Thus lightened and relieved, Perpetua
Recovered from her silent fit. Her eyes
Regained their former deep serenity,
Her tongue its gentle daring; for she knew
Her life should not be taken till her babe
Had strengthened and outgrown the need of her.
Daily we were amazed at her soft strength,
Her pliant and untroubled constancy,
Her smiling, soldierly contempt of death,
Her beauty and the sweetness of her voice.

Her father, when our first few bitterest days
Were over, like a gust of grief and rage,
Came to her in the prison with wild eyes,
And cried: 'How mean you, daughter, when you say
You are a Christian? How can any one
Of honoured blood, the child of such as me,
Be Christian? 'Tis an odious name, the badge
Only of outcasts and rebellious slaves!'
And she, grief-touched, but with unyielding gaze,
Showing the fulness of her slender height:

'This vessel, father, being what it is,
An earthen pitcher, would you call it thus?
Or would you name it by some other name?'
'Nay, surely,' said the old man, catching breath,
And pausing, and she answered: 'Nor can I
Call myself aught but what I surely am--
A Christian!' and her father, flashing back
In silent anger, left her for that time.

A special favour to Perpetua
Seemed daily to be given, and her soul
Was made the frequent vessel of God's grace,
Wherefrom we all, less gifted, sore athirst,
Drank courage and fresh joy; for glowing dreams
Were sent her, full of forms august, and fraught
With signs and symbols of the glorious end
Whereto God's love hath aimed us for Christ's sake.
Once--at what hour I know not, for we lay
In that foul dungeon, where all hours were lost,
And day and night were indistinguishable--
We had been sitting a long silent while,
Some lightly sleeping, others bowed in prayer,
When on a sudden, like a voice from God,
Perpetua spake to us and all were roused.
Her voice was rapt and solemn: 'Friends,' she said,
'Some word hath come to me in a dream. I saw
A ladder leading to heaven, all of gold,
Hung up with lances, swords, and hooks. A land
Of darkness and exceeding peril lay
Around it, and a dragon fierce as hell
Guarded its foot. We doubted who should first
Essay it, but you, Saturus, at last--
So God hath marked you for especial grace--
Advancing and against the cruel beast
Aiming the potent weapon of Christ's name--
Mounted, and took me by the hand, and I
The next one following, and so the rest
In order, and we entered with great joy
Into a spacious garden filled with light
And balmy presences of love and rest;
And there an old man sat, smooth-browed, white-haired,
Surrounded by unnumbered myriads
Of spiritual shapes and faces angel-eyed,
Milking his sheep; and lifting up his eyes
He welcomed us in strange and beautiful speech,
Unknown yet comprehended, for it flowed
Not through the ears, but forth-right to the soul,
God's language of pure love. Between the lips
Of each he placed a morsel of sweet curd;
And while the curd was yet within my mouth,
I woke, and still the taste of it remains,
Through all my body flowing like white flame,

Sweet as of some immaculate spiritual thing.'
And when Perpetua had spoken, all
Were silent in the darkness, pondering,
But Saturus spake gently for the rest:
'How perfect and acceptable must be
Your soul to God, Perpetua, that thus
He bends to you, and through you speaks his will.
We know now that our martyrdom is fixed,
Nor need we vex us further for this life.'

While yet these thoughts were bright upon our souls,
There came the rumour that a day was set
To hear us. Many of our former friends,
Some with entreaties, some with taunts and threats,
Came to us to pervert us; with the rest
Again Perpetua's father, worn with care;
Nor could we choose but pity his distress,
So miserably, with abject cries and tears,
He fondled her and called her 'Domina,'
And bowed his aged body at her feet,
Beseeching her by all the names she loved
To think of him, his fostering care, his years,
And also of her babe, whose life, he said,
Would fail without her; but Perpetua,
Sustaining by a gift of strength divine
The fulness of her noble fortitude,
Answered him tenderly: 'Both you and I,
And all of us, my father, at this hour
Are equally in God's hands, and what he wills
Must be'; but when the poor old man was gone
She wept, and knelt for many hours in prayer,
Sore tried and troubled by her tender heart.

One day, while we were at our midday meal,
Our cell was entered by the soldiery,
And we were seized and borne away for trial.
A surging crowd had gathered, and we passed
From street to street, hemmed in by tossing heads
And faces cold or cruel; yet we caught
At moments from masked lips and furtive eyes
Of friends--some known to us and some unknown--
Many veiled messages of love and praise.
The floorways of the long basilica
Fronted us with an angry multitude;
And scornful eyes and threatening foreheads frowned
In hundreds from the columned galleries.
We were placed all together at the bar,
And though at first unsteadied and confused
By the imperial presence of the law,
The pomp of judgment and the staring crowd,
None failed or faltered; with unshaken tongue
Each met the stern Proconsul's brief demand

In clear profession. Rapt as in a dream,
Scarce conscious of my turn, nor how I spake,
I watched with wondering eyes the delicate face
And figure of Perpetua; for her
We that were youngest of our company
Loved with a sacred and absorbing love,
A passion that our martyr's brotherly vow
Had purified and made divine. She stood
In dreamy contemplation, slightly bowed,
A glowing stillness that was near a smile
Upon her soft closed lips. Her turn had come,
When, like a puppet struggling up the steps,
Her father from the pierced and swaying crowd
Appeared, unveiling in his aged arms
The smiling visage of her babe. He grasped
Her robe, and strove to draw her down. All eyes
Were bent upon her. With a softening glance,
And voice less cold and heavy with death's doom,
The old Proconsul turned to her and said:
'Lady, have pity on your father's age;
Be mindful of your tender babe; this grain
Of harmless incense offer for the peace
And welfare of the Emperor'; but she,
Lifting far forth her large and noteless eyes,
As one that saw a vision, only said:
'I cannot sacrifice'; and he, harsh tongued,
Bending a brow upon her rough as rock,
With eyes that struck like steel, seeking to break
Or snare her with a sudden stroke of fear:
'Art thou a Christian?' and she answered, 'Yea,
I am a Christian!' In brow-blackening wrath
He motioned a contemptuous hand and bade
The lictors scourge the old man down and forth
With rods, and as the cruel deed was done,
Perpetua stood white with quivering lips,
And her eyes filled with tears. While yet his cries
Were mingling with the curses of the crowd,
Hilarianus, calling name by name,
Gave sentence, and in cold and formal phrase
Condemned us to the beasts, and we returned
Rejoicing to our prison. Then we wished
Our martyrdom could soon have followed, not
As doubting for our constancy, but some
Grew sick under the anxious long suspense.
Perpetua again was weighed upon
By grief and trouble for her babe, whom now
Her father, seeking to depress her will,
Withheld and would not send it; but at length
Word being brought her that the child indeed
No longer suffered, nor desired the breast,
Her peace returned, and, giving thanks to God,
All were united in new bonds of hope.

Now being fixed in certitude of death,
We stripped our souls of all their earthly gear,
The useless raiment of this world; and thus,
Striving together with a single will,
In daily increment of faith and power,
We were much comforted by heavenly dreams,
And waking visitations of God's grace.
Visions of light and glory infinite
Were frequent with us, and by night or day
Woke at the very name of Christ the Lord,
Taken at any moment on our lips;
So that we had no longer thought or care
Of life or of the living, but became
As spirits from this earth already freed,
Scarce conscious of the dwindling weight of flesh.
To Saturus appeared in dreams the space
And splendour of the heavenly house of God,
The glowing gardens of eternal joy,
The halls and chambers of the cherubim,
In wreaths of endless myriads involved
The blinding glory of the angel choir,
Rolling through deeps of wheeling cloud and light
The thunder of their vast antiphonies.
The visions of Perpetua not less
Possessed us with their homely tenderness--
As one, wherein she saw a rock-set pool
And weeping o'er its rim a little child,
Her brother, long since dead, Dinocrates:
Though sore athirst, he could not reach the stream,
Being so small, and her heart grieved thereat.
She looked again, and lo! the pool had risen,
And the child filled his goblet, and drank deep,
And prattling in a tender childish joy
Ran gaily off, as infants do, to play.
By this she knew his soul had found release
From torment, and had entered into bliss.

Quickly as by a merciful gift of God,
Our vigil passed unbroken. Yesternight
They moved us to the amphitheatre,
Our final lodging-place on earth, and there
We sat together at our agape
For the last time. In silence, rapt and pale,
We hearkened to the aged Saturus,
Whose speech, touched with a ghostly eloquence,
Canvassed the fraud and littleness of life,
God's goodness and the solemn joy of death.
Perpetua was silent, but her eyes
Fell gently upon each of us, suffused
With inward and eradiant light; a smile
Played often upon her lips.

While yet we sat,
A tribune with a band of soldiery
Entered our cell, and would have had us bound
In harsher durance, fearing our escape
By fraud or witchcraft; but Perpetua,
Facing him gently with a noble note
Of wonder in her voice, and on her lips
A lingering smile of mournful irony:
'Sir, are ye not unwise to harass us,
And rob us of our natural food and rest?
Should ye not rather tend us with soft care,
And so provide a comely spectacle?
We shall not honour Caesar's birthday well,
If we be waste and weak, a piteous crew,
Poor playthings for your proud and pampered beasts.'
The noisy tribune, whether touched indeed,
Or by her grave and tender grace abashed,
Muttered and stormed a while, and then withdrew.
The short night passed in wakeful prayer for some,
For others in brief sleep, broken by dreams
And spiritual visitations. Earliest dawn
Found us arisen, and Perpetua,
Moving about with smiling lips, soft-tongued,
Besought us to take food; lest so, she said,
For all the strength and courage of our hearts,
Our bodies should fall faint. We heard without,
Already ere the morning light was full,
The din of preparation, and the hum
Of voices gathering in the upper tiers;
Yet had we seen so often in our thoughts
The picture of this strange and cruel death,
Its festal horror, and its bloody pomp,
The nearness scarcely moved us, and our hands
Met in a steadfast and unshaken clasp.

The day is over. Ah, my friend, how long
With its wild sounds and bloody sights it seemed!
Night comes, and I am still alive--even I,
The least and last--with other two, reserved
To grace to-morrow's second day. The rest
Have suffered and with holy rapture passed
Into their glory. Saturus and the men
Were given to bears and leopards, but the crowd
Feasted their eyes upon no cowering shape,
Nor hue of fear, nor painful cry. They died
Like armed men, face foremost to the beasts,
With prayers and sacred songs upon their lips.
Perpetua and the frail Felicitas
Were seized before our eyes and roughly stripped,
And shrinking and entreating, not for fear,
Nor hurt, but bitter shame, were borne away
Into the vast arena, and hung up

In nets, naked before the multitude,
For a fierce bull, maddened by goads, to toss.
Some sudden tumult of compassion seized
The crowd, and a great murmur like a wave
Rose at the sight, and grew, and thundered up
From tier to tier, deep and imperious:
So white, so innocent they were, so pure:
Their tender limbs so eloquent of shame;
And so our loved ones were brought back, all faint,
And covered with light raiment, and again
Led forth, and now with smiling lips they passed
Pale, but unbowed, into the awful ring,
Holding each other proudly by the hand.

Perpetua first was tossed, and her robe rent,
But, conscious only of the glaring eyes,
She strove to hide herself as best she could
In the torn remnants of her flimsy robe,
And putting up her hands clasped back her hair,
So that she might not die as one in grief,
Unseemly and dishevelled. Then she turned,
And in her loving arms caressed and raised
The dying, bruised Felicitas. Once more
Gored by the cruel beast, they both were borne
Swooning and mortally stricken from the field.
Perpetua, pale and beautiful, her lips
Parted as in a lingering ecstasy,
Could not believe the end had come, but asked
When they were to be given to the beasts.
The keepers gathered round her--even they--
In wondering pity--while with fearless hand,
Bidding us all be faithful and stand firm,
She bared her breast, and guided to its goal
The gladiator's sword that pierced her heart.

The night is passing. In a few short hours
I too shall suffer for the name of Christ.
A boundless exaltation lifts my soul!
I know that they who left us, Saturus,
Perpetua, and the other blessed ones,
Await me at the opening gates of heaven.

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

War

By the Nile, the sacred river,
I can see the captive hordes,
Strain beneath the lash and quiver
At the long papyrus cords,
While in granite rapt and solemn,
Rising over roof and column,
Amen-hotep dreams, or Ramses,
Lord of Lords.

I can hear the trumpets waken
For a victory old and far-
Carchemish or Kadesh taken-
I can see the conqueror's car
Bearing down some Hittite valley,
Where the bowmen break and sally,
Sargina or Esarhaddon,
Grim with war!

From the mountain streams that sweeten
Indus, to the Spanish foam,
I can feel the broad earth beaten
By the serried tramp of Rome;
Through whatever foes environ
Onward with the might of iron-
Veni, vidi; veni vici-
Crashing home!

I can see the kings grow pallid
With astonished fear and hate,
As the hosts of Amr or Khaled
On their cities fall like fate;
Like the heat-wind from its prison
In the desert burst and risen-
La ilaha illah 'llahu-
God is great!

I can hear the iron rattle,
I can see the arrows sting
In some far-off northern battle,
Where the long swords sweep and swing;
I can hear the scalds declaiming,
I can see their eyeballs flaming,
Gathered in a frenzied circle
Round the king.

I can hear the horn of Uri
Roaring in the hills enorm;
Kindled at its brazen fury,
I can see the clansmen form;
In the dawn in misty masses,
Pouring from the silent passes
Over Granson or Morgarten

Like the storm.

On the lurid anvil ringing
To some slow fantastic plan,
I can hear the sword-smith singing
In the heart of old Japan—
Till the cunning blade grows tragic
With his malice and his magic—
Tenka tairan! Tenka tairan!
War to man!

Where a northern river charges
From the murky forest margins,
Round a broken palisade,
I can see the red men leaping,
See the sword of Daulac sweeping,
And the ghostly forms of heroes
Fall and fade.

I can feel the modern thunder
Of the cannon beat and blaze,
When the lines of men go under
On your proudest battle-days;
Through the roar I hear the lifting
Of the bloody chorus drifting
Round the burning mill at Valmy—
Marseillaise!

I can see the ocean rippled
With the driving shot like rain,
While the hulls are crushed and crippled,
And the guns are piled with slain;
O'er the blackened broad sea-meadow
Drifts a tall and titan shadow,
And the cannon of Trafalgar
Startle Spain.

Still the tides of fight are booming,
And the barren blood is spilt;
Still the banners are up-looming,
And the hands are on the hilt;
But the old world waxes wiser,
From behind the bolted visor
It descries at last the horror
And the guilt.

Yet the eyes are dim, nor wholly
Open to the golden gleam,
And the brute surrenders slowly
To the godhead and the dream.
From his cage of bar and girder,
Still at moments mad with murder,

Leaps the tiger, and his demon
Rules supreme.
One more war with fire and famine
Gathers—I can hear its cries—
And the years of might and Mammon
Perish in a world's demise;
When the strength of man is shattered,
And the powers of earth are scattered,
From beneath the ghastly ruin
Peace shall rise!

Archibald Lampman

We too shall Sleep

Not, not for thee,
Belovèd child, the burning grasp of life
Shall bruise the tender soul. The noise, and strife,
And clamor of midday thou shalt not see;
But wrapped for ever in thy quiet grave,
Too little to have known the earthly lot,
Time's clashing hosts above thine innocent head,
Wave upon wave,
Shall break, or pass as with an army's tread,
And harm thee not.

A few short years
We of the living flesh and restless brain
Shall plumb the deeps of life and know the strain,
The fleeting gleams of joy, the fruitless tears;
And then at last when all is touched and tried,
Our own immutable night shall fall, and deep
In the same silent plot, O little friend,
Side by thy side,
In peace that changeth not, nor knoweth end,
We too shall sleep.

Archibald Lampman

What Do Poets Want With Gold?

What do poets want with gold,
Cringing slaves and cushioned ease;
Are not crusts and garments old
Better for their souls than these?

Gold is but the juggling rod
Of a false usurping god,
Graven long ago in hell
With a sombre stony spell,
Working in the world forever.
Hate is not so strong to sever
Beating human heart from heart.
Soul from soul we shrink and part,
And no longer hail each other
With the ancient name of brother
Give the simple poet gold,
And his song will die of cold.
He must walk with men that reel
On the rugged path, and feel
Every sacred soul that is
Beating very near to his.
Simple, human, careless, free,
As God made him, he must be:
For the sweetest song of bird
Is the hidden tenor heard
In the dusk, an even-flush,
From the forest's inner hush,
Of the simple hermit thrush.

What do poets want with love?
Flowers that shiver out of hand,
And the fervid fruits that prove
Only bitter broken sand?

Poets speak of passion best,
When their dreams are undistressed,
And the sweetest songs are sung,
E'er the inner heart is stung.
Let them dream; 'tis better so;
Ever dream, but never know.
If the their spirits once have drained
All that goblet crimson-stained,
Finding what they dreamed divine,
Only earthly sluggish wine,
Sooner will the warm lips pale,
And the flawless voices fail,
Sooner come the drooping wing,
And the afterdays that bring,
No such songs as did the spring.

Archibald Lampman

White Pansies

Day and night pass over, rounding,
Star and cloud and sun,
Things of drift and shadow, empty
Of my dearest one.

Soft as slumber was my baby,
Beaming bright and sweet;
Daintier than bloom or jewel
Were his hands and feet.

He was mine, mine all, mine only,
Mine and his the debt;
Earth and Life and Time are changers;
I shall not forget.

Pansies for my dear one--heartsease--
Set them gently so;
For his stainless lips and forehead,
Pansies white as snow.

Would that in the flower-grown little
Grave they dug so deep,
I might rest beside him, dreamless,
Smile no more, nor weep.

Archibald Lampman

Why Do Ye Call The Poet Lonely

Why do ye call the poet lonely,
Because he dreams in lonely places?
He is not desolate, but only
Sees, where ye cannot, hidden faces.

Archibald Lampman

Winter

The long days came and went; the riotous bees
Tore the warm grapes in many a dusty vine,
And men grew faint and thin with too much ease,
And Winter gave no sign:
But all the while beyond the northmost woods
He sat and smiled and watched his spirits play
In elfish dance and eery roundelay,
Tripping in many moods
With snowy curve and fairy crystal shine.

But now the time is come: with southward speed
The elfin spirits pass: a secret sting
Hath fallen and smitten flower and fruit and weed,
And every leafy thing.
The wet woods moan: the dead leaves break and fall;
In still night-watches wakeful men have heard
The muffled pipe of many a passing bird,
High over hut and hall,
Straining to southward and unresting wing.

And then they come with colder feet, and fret
The winds with snow, and tuck the streams to sleep
With icy sheet and gleaming coverlet,
And fill the valleys deep
With curved drifts, and a strange music raves
Among the pines, sometimes in wails, and then
In whistled laughter, till affrighted men
Draw close, and into caves
And earthy holes the blind beasts curl and creep.

And so all day above the toiling heads
Of men's poor chimneys, full of impish freaks,
Tearing and twisting in tight-curled shreds
The vain unnumbered reeks,
The Winter speeds his fairies forth and mocks
Poor bitten men with laughter icy cold,
Turning the brown of youth to white and old
With hoary-woven locks,
And grey men young with roses in their cheeks.

And after thaws, when liberal water swells
The bursting eaves, he biddeth drip and grow
The curly horns of ribbed icicles
In many a beard-like row.
In secret moods of mercy and soft dole,
Old warped wrecks and things of mouldering death
That summer scorns and man abandoneth
His careful hands console
With lawny robes and draperies of snow.

And when the night comes, his spirits with chill feet,
Winged with white mirth and noiseless mockery,

Across men's pallid windows peer and fleet,
And smiling silverly
Draw with mute fingers on the frosted glass
Quaint fairy shapes of iced witcheries,
Pale flowers and glinting ferns and frigid trees
And meads of mystic grass,
Graven in many an austere phantasy.

But far away the Winter dreams alone,
Rustling among his snow-drifts, and resigns
Cold fondling ears to hear the cedars moan
In dusky-skirted lines
Strange answers of an ancient runic call;
Or somewhere watches with antique eyes,
Gray-chill with frosty-lidded reveries,
The silvery moonshine fall
In misty wedges through the girth of pines.

Poor mortals haste and hide away: creep soon
Into your icy beds: the embers die:
And on your frosted panes the pallid moon
Is glimmering brokenly.
Mutter faint prayers that spring will come e'erwhile,
Scarring with thaws and dripping days and nights
The shining majesty of him that smites
And slays you with a smile
Upon his silvery lips, of glinting mockery.

Archibald Lampman

Winter Break

All day between high-curded clouds the sun
Shone down like summer on the steaming planks.
The long, bright icicles in dwindling ranks
Dripped from the murmuring eaves till one by one
They fell. As if the spring had now begun,
The quilted snow, sun-softened to the core,
Loosened and shunted with a sudden roar
From downward roofs. Not even with day done
Had ceased the sound of waters, but all night
I heard it. In my dreams forgetfully bright
Methought I wandered in the April woods,
Where many a silver-piping sparrow was,
By gurgling brooks and spouting solitudes,
And stooped, and laughed, and plucked hepaticas.

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 Hue's Recalled

Life is not all for effort: there are hours,
When fancy breaks from the exacting will,
And rebel though takes schoolboy's holiday,
Rejoicing in its idle strength. 'Tis then,
And only at such moments, that we know
The treasure of hours gone-scenes once beheld,
Sweet voices and words bright and beautiful,
Impetuous deeds that woke the God within us,
The loveliness of forms and thoughts and colors,
A moment marked and then as soon forgotten.
These things are ever near us, laid away,
Hidden and waiting the appropriate times,
In the quiet garner-house of memory.
There in the silent unaccounted depth,
Beneath the heated strainage and the rush
That teem the noisy surface of the hours,
All things that ever touched us are stored up,
Growing more mellow like sealed wine with age;
We thought them dead, and they are but asleep.
In moments when the heart is most at rest
And least expectant, from the luminous doors,
And sacred dwelling place of things unfeared,
They issue forth, and we who never knew
Till then how potent and how real they were,
Take them, and wonder, and so bless the hour.

Such gifts are sweetest when unsought. To me,
As I was loitering lately in my dreams,
Passing from one remembrance to another,
Like him who reads upon an outstretched map,
Content and idly happy, these rose up,
Out of that magic well-stored picture house,
No dream, rather a thing most keenly real,
The memory of a moment, when with feet,
Arrested and spell bound, and captured eyes,
Made wide with joy and wonder, I beheld
The spaces of a white and wintry land
Swept with the fire of sunset, all its width,
Vale, forest, town, and misty eminence,
A miracle of color and of beauty.

I had walked out, as I remember now,
With covered ears, for the bright air was keen,
To southward up the gleaming snow-packed fields,
With the snowshoer's long rejoicing stride,
Marching at ease. It was a radiant day
In February, the month of the great struggle
'Twixt sun and frost, when with advancing spears,
The glittering golden vanguard of the spring
Holds the broad winter's yet unbroken rear
In long-closed wavering contest. Thin pale threads
Like streaks of ash across the far off blue

Were drawn, nor seemed to move. A brooding silence
Kept all the land, a stillness as of sleep;
But in the east the grey and motionless woods,
Watching the great sun's fiery slow decline,
Grew deep with gold. To westward all was silver.
An hour had passed above me; I had reached;
The loftiest level of the snow-piled fields,
Clear eyed, but unobservant noting not,
That all the plain beneath me and the hills
Took on a change of colour, splendid, gradual,
Leaving no spot the same; nor that the sun
Now like a fiery torrent overflamed
The great line of the west. Ere yet I turned
With long stride homeward, being heated
With the loose swinging motion, weary too,
Nor uninclined to rest, a buried fence,
Whose topmost log just shouldered from the snow,
Made me a seat, and thence with heated cheeks,
Grazed by the northwind's edge of stinging ice,
I looked far out upon the snow-bound waste,
The lifting hills and intersecting forests,
The scarce marked courses of the buried streams,
And as I looked I list memory of the frost,
Transfixed with wonder, overborne with joy.
I saw them in their silence and their beauty;
Swept by the sunset's rapid hand of fire,
Sudden, mysterious, every moment deepening
To some new majesty of rose or flame.
The whole broad west was like molten sea
Of crimson. In the north the light-lined hills
Were veiled far off as with a mist of rose
Wondrous and soft. Along the darkening east
The gold of all the forests slowly changed
To purple. In the valley far before me,
Low sunk in sapphire shadows, from its hills,
Softer and lovelier than an opening flower,
Uprose a city with its sun-touched towers,
A bunch of amethysts.

Like one spell-bound
Caught in the presence of some god, I stood,
Nor felt the keen wind and the deadly air,
But watched the sun go down, and watched the gold
Fade from the town and the withdrawing hills,
Their westward shapes athwart the dusky red
Freeze into sapphire, saw the arc of rose
Rise ever higher in the violet east,
Above the frore front of the uprearing night
Remorsefully soft and sweet. Then I awoke
As from a dream, and from my shoulders shook
The warning chill, till then unfelt, unfeared.

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

Winter-Store

Subtly conscious, all awake,
Let us clear our eyes, and break
Through the cloudy chrysalis,
See the wonder as it is.
Down a narrow alley, blind,
Touch and vision, heart and mind,
Turned sharply inward, still we plod,
Till the calmly smiling god
Leaves us, and our spirits grow
More thin, more acrid, as we go.
Creeping by the sullen wall,
We forego the power to see,
The threads that bind us to the All,
God or the Immensity;
Whereof on the eternal road
Man is but a passing mode.

Too blind we are, too little see
Of the magic pageantry,
Every minute, every hour,
From the cloudflake to the flower,
Forever old, forever strange,
Issuing in perpetual change
From the rainbow gates of Time.

But he who through this common air
Surely knows the great and fair,
What is lovely, what sublime,
Becomes in an increasing span,
One with earth and one with man,
One, despite these mortal scars,
With the planets and the stars;
And Nature from her holy place,
Bending with unveiled face,
Fills him in her divine employ
With her own majestic joy.

Up the fielded slopes at morn,
Where light wefts of shadow pass,
Films upon the bending corn,
I shall sweep the purple grass.
Sun-crowned heights and mossy woods,
And the outer solitudes,
Mountain-valleys, dim with pine,
Shall be home and haunt of mine.
I shall search in crannied hollows,
Where the sunlight scarcely follows,
And the secret forest brook
Murmurs, and from nook to nook
Forever downward curls and cools,
Frothing in the bouldered pools.

Many a noon shall find me laid
In the pungent balsam shade,
Where sharp breezes spring and shiver
On some deep rough-coasted river,
And the plangent waters come,
Amber-hued and streaked with foam;
Where beneath the sunburnt hills
All day long the crowded mills
With remorseless champ and scream
Overlord the sluicing stream,
And the rapids' iron roar
Hammers at the forest's core;
Where corded rafts creep slowly on,
Glittering in the noonday sun,
And the tawny river-dogs,
Shepherding the branded logs,
Bind and heave with cadenced cry;
Where the blackened tugs go by,
Panting hard and straining slow,
Laboring at the weighty tow,
Flat-nosed barges all in trim,
Creeping in long cumbrous line,
Loaded to the water's brim
With the clean, cool-scented pine.

Perhaps in some low meadow-land,
Stretching wide on either hand,
I shall see the belted bees
Rocking with the tricky breeze
In the spired meadow-sweet,
Or with eager trampling feet
Burrowing in the boneset blooms,
Treading out the dry perfumes.
Where sun-hot hay-fields newly mown
Climb the hillside ruddy brown,
I shall see the haymakers,
While the noonday scarcely stirs,
Brown of neck and booted gray,
Tossing up the rustling hay,
While the hay-racks bend and rock,
As they take each scented cock,
Jolting over dip and rise;
And the wavering butterflies
O'er the spaces brown and bare
Light and wander here and there.

I shall stray by many a stream,
Where the half-shut lilies gleam,
Napping out the sultry days
In the quiet secluded bays;
Where the tasseled rushes tower,
O'er the purple pickerel-flower,

And the floating dragon-fly-
Azure glint and crystal gleam-
Watches o'er the burnished stream
With his eye of ebony;
Where the bull-frog lolls at rest
On his float of lily-leaves,
That the swaying water weaves,
And distends his yellow breast,
Lowing out from shore to shore
With a hollow vibrant roar;
Where the softest wind that blows,
As it lightly comes and goes,
O'er the jungled river meads,
Stirs a whisper in the reeds,
And wakes the crowded bull-rushes
From their stately reveries,
Flashing through their long-leaved hordes
Like a brandishing of swords;
There, too, the frost-like arrow-flowers
Tremble to the golden core,
Children of enchanted hours,
Whom the rustling river bore
In the night's bewildered noon,
Woven of water and the moon.

I shall hear the grasshoppers
From the parched grass rehearse,
And with drowsy note prolong
Evermore the same thin song.
I shall hear the crickets tell
Stories by the humming well,
And mark the locust, with quaint eyes,
Caper in his cloak of gray
Like a jester in disguise
Rattling by the dusty way.

I shall dream by upland fences,
Where the season's wealth condenses
Over many a weedy wreck,
Wild, uncared-for, desert places,
That sovereign Beauty loves to deck
With her softest, dearest graces.
There the long year dreams in quiet,
And the summer's strength runs riot.
Shall I not remember these,
Deep in winter reveries?
Berried brier and thistle-bloom,
And milkweed with its dense perfume;
Slender vervain towering up
In a many-branched cup,
Like a candlestick, each spire
Kindled with a violet fire;

Matted creepers and wild cherries,
Purple-bunched elderberries,
And on scanty plots of sod
Groves of branchy goldenrod.

What though autumn mornings now,
Winterward with glittering brow,
Stiffen in the silver grass;
And what though robins flock and pass,
With subdued and sober call,
To the old year's funeral;
Though October's crimson leaves
Rustle at the gusty door,
And the tempest round the eaves
Alternate with pipe and roar;
I sit, as erst, unharmed, secure,
Conscious that my store is sure,
Whatsoe'er the fenced fields,
Or the untilled forest yields
Of unhurt remembrances,
Or thoughts, far-glimpsed, half-followed, these
I have reaped and laid away,
A treasure of unwinnowed grain,
To the garner packed and gray
Gathered without toil or strain.

And when the darker days shall come,
And the fields are white and dumb;
When our fires are half in vain,
And the crystal starlight weaves
Mockeries of summer leaves,
Pictured on the icy pane;
When the high aurora gleams
Far above the Arctic streams
Like a line of shifting spears,
And the broad pine-circled meres,
Glimmering in that spectral light,
Thunder through the northern night;
Then within the bolted door
I shall con my summer store;
Though the fences scarcely show
Black above the drifted snow,
Though the icy sweeping wind
Whistle in the empty tree,
Safe within the sheltered mind,
I shall feed on memory.

Yet across the windy night
Comes upon its wings a cry;
Fashioned forms and modes take flight,
And a vision sad and high
Of the laboring world down there,

Where the lights burn red and warm,
Pricks my soul with sudden stare,
Glowing through the veils of storm.
In the city yonder sleep
Those who smile and those who weep,
Those whose lips are set with care,
Those whose brows are smooth and fair;
Mourners whom the dawning light
Shall grapple with an old distress;
Lovers folded at midnight
In their bridal happiness;
Pale watchers by beloved beds,
Fallen a-drowse with nodding heads,
Whom sleep captured by surprise,
With the circles round their eyes;
Maidens with quiet-taken breath,
Dreaming of enchanted bowers;
Old men with the mask of death;
Little children soft as flowers;
Those who wake wild-eyed and start
In some madness of the heart;
Those whose lips and brows of stone
Evil thoughts have graven upon,
Shade by shade and line by line,
Refashioning what was once divine.

All these sleep, and through the night,
Comes a passion and a cry,
With a blind sorrow and a might,
I know not whence, I know not why,
A something I cannot control,
A nameless hunger of the soul.
It holds me fast. In vain, in vain,
I remember how of old
I saw the ruddy race of men,
Through the glittering world outrolled,
A gay-smiling multitude,
All immortal, all divine,
Treading in a wreathed line
By a pathway through a wood.

Archibald Lampman

Winter-Thought

The wind-swayed daisies, that on every side
Throng the wide fields in whispering companies,
Serene and gently smiling like the eyes
Of tender children long beatified,
The delicate thought-wrapped buttercups that glide
Like sparks of fire above the wavering grass,
And swing and toss with all the airs that pass,
Yet seem so peaceful, so preoccupied;

These are the emblems of pure pleasures flown,
I scarce can think of pleasure without these.
Even to dream of them is to disown
The cold forlorn midwinter reveries,
Lulled with the perfume of old hopes new-blown,
No longer dreams, but dear realities.

Archibald Lampman

With The Night

O doubts, dull passions, and base fears,
That harassed and oppressed the day,
Ye poor remorsees and vain tears,
That shook this house of clay:

All heaven to the western bars
Is glittering with the darker dawn;
Here with the earth, the night, the stars,
Ye have no place: begone!

Archibald Lampman