Classic Poetry Series

Duncan Campbell Scott

- poems -

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Duncan Campbell Scott (August 2, 1862 – December 19, 1947)

Duncan Campbell Scott was a Canadian poet and prose writer. With Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman and Archibald Lampman, he is classed as one of Canada's Confederation Poets.

Scott was also a Canadian lifetime civil servant who served as deputy superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932, and is "best known" today for "advocating the assimilation of Canada's First Nations peoples" in that capacity.

Life

Scott was born in Ottawa, Ontario, the son of Rev. William Scott and Janet MacCallum. He was educated at Stanstead Wesleyan Academy.

Early in life, he became an accomplished pianist.

Scott wanted to be a doctor, but family finances were precarious, so in 1879 he joined the federal civil service. As the story goes, "William Scott might not have money [but] he had connections in high places. Among his acquaintances was the prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, who agreed to meet with Duncan. As chance would have it, when Duncan arrived for his interview, the prime minister had a memo on his desk from the Indian Branch of the Department of the Interior asking for a temporary copying clerk. Making a quick decision while the serious young applicant waited in front of him, Macdonald wrote across the request: 'Approved. Employ Mr. Scott at $1.50.'"

Scott "spent his entire career in the same branch of government, working his way up to the position of deputy superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1923, the highest non-elected position possible in his department. He remained in this post until his retirement in 1932."

Scott's father also subsequently found work in Indian Affairs, and the entire family moved into a newly built house on 108 Lisgar St., where Duncan Campbell Scott would live for the rest of his life.

In 1883 Scott met fellow civil servant, Archibald Lampman. "It was the beginning of an instant friendship that would continue unbroken until Lampman's death sixteen years later.... It was Scott who initiated wilderness camping trips, a recreation that became Lampman's favourite escape from

daily drudgery and family problems. In turn, Lampman's dedication to the art of poetry would inspire Scott's first experiments in verse." By the late 1880s Scott was publishing poetry in the presitigious American magazine, Scribner's. In 1889 his poems "At the Cedars" and "Ottawa" were included in the pioneering anthology, Songs of the Great Dominion.

Scott and Lampman "shared a love of poetry and the Canadian wilderness. During the 1890s the two made a number of canoe trips together in the area north of Ottawa."

In 1892 and 1893, Scott, Lampman, and William Wilfred Campbell wrote a literary column, "At the Mermaid Inn," for the Toronto Globe. "Scott ... came up with the title for it. His intention was to conjure up a vision of The Mermaid Inn Tavern in old London where Sir Walter Raleigh founded the famous club whose members included Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and other literary lights.

In 1893 Scott published his first book of poetry, The Magic House and Other Poems. It would be followed by seven more volumes of verse: Labor and the Angel (1898), New World Lyrics and Ballads (1905), Via Borealis (1906), Lundy's Lane and Other Poems (1916), Beauty and Life (1921), The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott (1926) and The Green Cloister (1935).

In 1894, Scott married Belle Botsford, a concert violinist, whom he had met at a recital in Ottawa. They had one child, Elizabeth, who died at 12. Before she was born, Scott asked his mother and sisters to leave his home (his father had died in 1891), causing a long-time rift in the family.

In 1896 Scott published his first collection of stories, In the Village of Viger, "a collection of delicate sketches of French Canadian life. Two later collections, The Witching of Elspie (1923) and The Circle of Affection (1947), contained many fine short stories." Scott also wrote a novel, although it was not published until after his death (as The Untitled Novel, in 1979).

After Lampman died in 1899, Scott helped publish a number of editions of Lampman's poetry.

Scott "was a prime mover in the establishment of the Ottawa Little Theatre and the Dominion Drama Festival." In 1923 the Little Theatre performed his one-act play, Pierre; it was later published in Canadian Plays from Hart House Theatre (1926).

His wife died in 1929. In 1931 he married poet Elise Aylen, more than 30 years his junior. After he retired the next year, "he and Elise spent much of the 1930s and 1940s travelling in Europe, Canada and the United States."

He died in December 1947 in Ottawa at the age of 85 and is buried in Ottawa's Beechwood Cemetery.

Indian Affairs

Aside from his poetry, Scott made his mark in Canadian history as the head of the Department of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932.

Even before Confederation, the Canadian government had adopted a policy of assimilation. "The Canadian government's Indian policy had already been set before Scott was in a position to influence it, but he never saw any reason to question its assumption that the 'red' man ought to become just like the 'white' man. Shortly after he became Deputy Superintendent, he wrote approvingly: 'The happiest future for the Indian race is absorption into the general population, and this is the object and policy of our government.'... Assimilation, so the reasoning went, would solve the 'Indian problem,' and wrenching children away from their parents to 'civilize' them in residential schools until they were eighteen was believed to be a sure way of achieving the government's goal. Scott ... would later pat himself on the back: 'I was never unsympathetic to aboriginal ideals, but there was the law which I did not originate and which I never tried to amend in the direction of

severity.'"

"I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone… Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill. ”

—Duncan Campbell Scott,

In 1920, under Scott's direction, it became mandatory for all native children between the ages of seven and fifteen to attend one of Canada's Residential Schools. The children were taken away from their homes, their families, and their culture, with or without their parents' consent.

"In all, about 150,000 aboriginal, Inuit and Métis children were removed from their communities and forced to attend the schools." Many of the children who attended these schools lived in terrible conditions; in some cases the mortality rate exceeded fifty percent due to the spread of infectious disease. Students were punished for speaking their native languages. In some cases they were physically, mentally, and sexually abused, actions either covered up or tolerated in the drive to achieve the objective quoted above.

When Scott retired, his "policy of assimilating the Indians had been so much in keeping with the thinking of the time that he was widely praised for his capable administration."

Writing

Scott's "literary reputation has never been in doubt. He has been well represented in virtually all major anthologies of Canadian poetry published since 1900."

In Poets of the Younger Generation (1901), Scottish literary critic William Archer wrote of Scott:

He is above everything a poet of climate and atmosphere, employing with a nimble, graphic touch the clear, pure, transparent colours of a richly-furnished palette.... Though it must not be understood that his talent is merely descriptive. There is a philosophic and also a romantic strain in it..... There is scarcely a poem of Mr. Scott's from which one could not cull some memorable descriptive passage.... As a rule Mr. Scott's workmanship is careful and highly finished. He is before everything a colourist. He paints in lines of a peculiar and vivid translucency. But he is also a metrist of no mean skill, and an imaginative thinker of no common capacity.

The Government of Canada biography of him says that: "Although the quality of Scott's work is uneven, he is at his best when describing the Canadian wilderness and Indigenous peoples. Although they constitute a small portion of his total output, Scott's widely recognized and valued 'Indian poems' cemented his literary reputation. In these poems, the reader senses the conflict that Scott felt between his role as an administrator committed to an assimilation policy for Canada's Native peoples and his feelings as a poet, saddened by the encroachment of European civilization on the Indian way of life."

"There is not a really bad poem in the book,” literary critic Desmond Pacey said of Scott's first book, The Magic House and Other Poems, “and there are a number of extremely good ones." The 'extremely good ones' include the strange, dream-like sonnets of "In the House of Dreams." "Probably the best known poem from the collection is 'At the Cedars,' a grim narrative about the death of a young man and his sweetheart during a log-jam on the Ottawa River. It is crudely melodramatic,... but its style — stark understatement, irregular lines, and abrupt rhymes — makes it the most experimental poem in the book."

His next book, Labour and the Angel, "is a slighter volume than The Magic House in size and content. The lengthy title poem makes dreary reading.... Of greater interest is his growing willingness to experiment with stanza form, variations in line length, use of partial rhyme, and lack of rhyme." Notable new poems included "The Cup" and the sonnet "The Onandaga Madonna." But arguably "the most memorable poem in the new collection" was the fantasy, "The Piper of Arll." One person who long remembered that poem was future British Poet Laureate John Masefield, who read "The Piper of Arll" as a teenager and years later wrote to Scott:

I had never (till that time) cared very much for poetry, but your poem impressed me deeply, and set me on fire. Since then poetry has been the one deep influence in my life, and to my love of poetry I owe all my friends, and the position I now hold.

New World Lyrics and Ballads (1905) revealed "a voice that is sounding ever more different from the other Confederation Poets ... his dramatic power is increasingly apparent in his response to the wilderness and the lives of the people who lived there." The poetry included "On the Way to the Mission" and the much-anthologized "The Forsaken," two of Scott's best-known "Indian poems."

Lundy's Lane and Other Poems (1916) seemed "to have been cobbled together at the insistence of his publishers, who wanted a collection of his work that had not been published in any previous volume.". The title poem was one that had won Scott, "in the Christmas Globe contest of 1908,... the prize of one hundred dollars, offered for the best poem on a Canadian historical theme.". Other notable poems in the volume include the pretty lyric "A Love Song," the long meditation, "The Height of Land," and the even longer "Lines Written in Memory of Edmund Morris." Anthologist John Garvin called the last "so original, tender and beautiful that it is destined to live among the best in Canadian literature."

"In his old age, Scott would look back upon Beauty and Life (1921) as his favourite among his volumes of verse," E.K. Brown tells us, adding: "In it most of the poetic kinds he cared about are represented." There is a great diversity, from the moving war elegy "To a Canadian Aviator Who Died For His Country in France," to the strange, apocalyptic "A Vision."

The Green Cloister, published after Scott's retirement, "is a travelogue of the sites he visited in Europe with Elise: Lake Como, Ravelllo, Kensington Gardens, East Gloucester, etc. — descriptive and contemplative poems by an observant tourist. Those with a Canadian setting include two Indian poems of near-melodrama — 'A Scene at Lake Manitou' and 'At Gull Lake, August 1810' —that are in stark contrast to the overall serenity of the volume." More typical is the title poem, "Chiostro Verde."

The Circle of Affection (1947) contains 26 poems Scott had written since Cloister, and several prose pieces, including his Royal Society address on "Poetry and Progress." It includes "At Delos," which brings to mind the poet's approaching death:

There is no grieving in the world

As beauty fades throughout the years:

The pilgrim with the weary heart

Brings to the grave his tears.

Reputation

Scott was honored for his writing during and after his lifetime. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1899 and served as its president from 1921 to 1922. The Society awarded him the second-ever Lorne Pierce Medal in 1927 for his contributions to Canadian literature.

In 1934 he was made a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George.

He also received honorary degrees from the University of Toronto (Doctor of Letters in 1922) and Queen's University (Doctor of Laws in 1939).

In 1948, the year after his death, he was designated a Person of National Historic Significance.

However, as the Encyclopædia Britannica points out, Scott is "best known at the end of the 20th century," not for his writing, but "for advocating the assimilation of Canada’s First Nations peoples."

As part of their Worst Canadian poll, a panel of experts commissioned by Canada's National History Society named Scott one of the Worst Canadians in the August 2007 issue of The Beaver.

Arc Poetry Magazine renamed the annual "Archibald Lampman Award" (given to a poet in the National Capital Region) to the Lampman-Scott Award in recognition of Scott's enduring legacy in Canadian poetry, with the first award under the new name given out in 2007.

The 2008 winner of the award, Shane Rhodes, turned over half of the $1,500 prize money to the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, a First Nations health centre. "Taking that money wouldn't have been right, with what I'm writing about," Rhodes said. The poet was researching First Nations history and found Scott's name repeatedly referenced. Rhodes felt "Scott's legacy as a civil servant overshadows his work as a pioneer of Canadian poetry", in the words of a CBC News report.

Anita Lahey, editor of Arc Poetry Magazine, responded with a statement that she thought Scott's actions as head of Indian Affairs were important to remember, but did not eclipse his role in the history of Canadian literature. "I think it matters that we're aware of it and that we think about and talk about these things," she said. "I don't think controversial or questionable activities in the life of any artist or writer is something that should necessarily discount the literary legacy that they leave behind."

Eserleri:

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A Legend Of Christ's Nativity

At Bethlehem upon the hill,
The day was done, the night was nigh,
The dusk was deep and had its will,
The stars were very small and still,
Like unblown tapers, faint and high.

The noises had begun to fall,
And quiet stole upon the place,
The howl of dogs along the wall,
Voices that from the houstops call
And answer, and the grace

Of some low breath of even-song
Grew faint apace: between the rocks
In misty pastures, and along
The dim hillside with crook and thong
The lonely shepherds watched their flocks.

The Inn-master within the Inn
Called loudly out after this sort,
'Draw no more water, cease the din,
Pile the loose fodder, and begin
To turn the mules out of the court.

The time has come to shut the gate,
Make way,' he cried, and then began
To sweep and set the litter straight,
And pile the saddle-bags and freight
Of some belated caravan.

The drivers whirled their beasts about,
And beat them on with shoutings great;
The nosebags slipped, the feed flew out,
The water-buckets reeled, the rout
Went jostling onward to the gate.

Came one unto the master then,
Hasting to find him through the gloom,
'Give us a place to rest;' and when
He spake, the master cried again,
'There is no room--there is no room.'

'But I have come from Nazareth,
Full three days' toil to Bethlehem'--
'What matters that,' the master saith,
'For here is hardly room for breath;
The guests curse me for crowding them.'

'Hold, Sir! leave me not so, I pray'--
He plucked him sudden by the sleeve,
'My wife is with me and doth say,
Her hour hath come, I beg you, stay,

And make some plan for her relief.'

'Two hours ago you might have had
The chamber wherein stands the loom;
But then to drive me wholly mad,
Came this great merchant from Baghdad,
And thrust himself into the room.

'There is no other shelf to call
A bed--But just beyond the gate,
You may find shelter in a stall,
If there be shelter left at all,
You may be even now too late.'

Beyond the gate within the night,
A figure rested on the ground,
About her all the rout took flight,
The dizzy noise, the flashing light,
The mules were tramping all around.

Leaning in mute expectancy,
Beneath a stunted sycamore,
She added darkness utterly,
To the dim light, the shrouded tree,
By her hands held her face before.

And yet to mock her eye's desire,
The cavern into which she stared,
Was lit with disks and lines of fire;
When triple darkness did conspire,
The secret founts of light were bared.

And all the wheeling fire was rife
With haunting fears, her broken breath
Grew short with this prophetic strife;
What was for one the dawn of life,
Would be for one the dawn of death.

Meantime the stranger with a lamp,
Which lit the darkness, small and wan,
Searched where the mules did tramp and stamp,
Amid the litter and the damp,
For some small place to rest upon.

And there against the furthest wall,
Where the black shade was dense and deep,
He found a mean and meager stall,
But there when the weak light did fall,
He found a little lad asleep.

He lifted up his childish head,
And smiled serenely at the light,

'And have you found him, then,' he said,
'My brother who I thought was dead,
I lost him in the crowd last night.

'His name is Ezra, and he is
So tall and strong that when I try,
Standing on tiptoe for a kiss
I could not reach, except for this,
He lifts me up so easily.

'I had two little doves to take
Up to the booths'--he held his breath,
'Peace, child! and for your mother's sake,
Yield me this place--nay, nay! awake!
My weary wife is sick to death.'

'I will,' the little lad replied
'I promised never to forget
My mother, years ago she died,
I will lie out on the hillside,
And I may find dear Ezra yet.'

And now she drooped her weary head,
Within that comfortless manger,
It might have been a palace bed,
With canopy of gold instead,
So little did she know or care.

_Gentle Jesus, slumber mild,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Succored by a little child,
Lull, lullaby._

_You of children are the king,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Sovereign to all ministering,
Lull, lullaby._

_Grace you bring them from above,
Lullaby, lullaby;
They give promise, lisping love,
Lull, lullaby._

And out upon the darkened hill,
With all the quiet-pastured sheep,
Charmed by the falling of a rill,
Where in the pool it cadenced still,
The little lad was fallen asleep.

All his young dreams were robed with power.
And glad were all his vision folk;
He wandered on from hour to hour,

With Ezra, happy as a flower
That blooms safe-shadowed by the oak.

But once before his dreams were told,
He thought he saw within the deep
Vault of the sky a rose unfold,
Made all of fire and lovely gold,
Whose petals seemed to glow and leap,

As if each dewy, crystal cell
Were a great angel live with light,
And trembling to the coronal,
Merging in sheen of pearl and shell,
With his great comrade, equal, bright,

Until the petals flashed and sprang,
And folded to the central heart:
Music there was that showered and rang,
As if each angel harped and sang,
Controlled by some celestial art.

The child saw splendor without name,
And turned and smiled, and all the noise
Of strings and singing sank; it came
Faint and dream-altered, yet the same,
Soft-tempered to his mother's voice.

_Slumber, slumber, gentle child,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Sweet as henna, dear and mild,
Lull, lullaby._

_You the first of all the race,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Gave your master early grace,
Lull, lullaby._

_Gave a shelter for his head,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Took the chilly earth instead,
Lull, lullaby._

_Now take comfort infant earth,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Jesus Christ is come to birth,
Lull, lullaby._

_For his principality,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Children cluster at his knee,
Lull, lullaby._

_Hail the heaven-happy age,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Love begins his pilgrimage,
Lull, lullaby._

Duncan Campbell Scott

A Love Song

I gave her a rose in early June,
Fed with the sun and the dew,
Each petal I said is a note in the tune,
The rose is the whole tune through and through,
The tune is the whole red-hearted rose,
Flush and form, honey and hue,
Lull with the cadence and throb to the close,
I love you, I love you, I love you.

She gave me a rose in early June,
Fed with the sun and the dew,
Each petal she said is a mount in the moon,
The rose is the whole moon through and through,
The moon is the whole pale-hearted rose,
Round and radiance, burnish and blue,
Break in the flood-tide that murmurs and flows,
I love you, I love you, I love you.

This is our love in early June,
Fed with the sun and the dew,
Moonlight and roses hid in a tune,
The roses are music through and through,
The moonlight falls in the breath of the rose,
Light and cadence, honey and hue,
Mingle, and murmur, and flow to the close,
I love you, I love you, I love you.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Afterwards

Her life was touched with early frost,
About the April of her day,
Her hold on earth was lightly lost,
And like a leaf she went away.

Her soul was chartered for great deeds,
For gentle war unwonted here:
Her spirit sought her clearer needs,
An Empyrean atmosphere.

At hush of eve we hear her still
Say with her clear, her perfect smile,
And with her silver-throated thrill:
"A little while - a little while."

Duncan Campbell Scott

An Impromptu

Here in the pungent gloom
Where the tamarac roses glow
And the balsam burns its perfume,
A vireo turns his slow
Cadence, as if he gloated
Over the last phrase he floated;
Each one he moulds and mellows
Matching it with its fellows:
So have you noted
How the oboe croons,
The canary-throated,
In the gloom of the violoncellos
And bassoons.

But afar in the thickset forest
I hear a sound go free,
Crashing the stately neighbours
The pine and the cedar tree,
Horns and harps and tabors,
Drumming and harping and horning
In savage minstrelsy--
It wakes in my soul a warning
Of the wind of destiny.

My life is soaring and swinging
In triple walls of quiet,
In my heart there is rippling and ringing
A song with melodious riot,
When a fateful thing comes nigh it
A hush falls, and then
I hear in the thickset world
The wind of destiny hurled
On the lives of men.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Angel

Come to me when grief is over,
When the tired eyes,
Seek thy cloudy wings to cover
Close their burning skies.

Come to me when tears have dwindled
Into drops of dew,
When the sighs like sobs re-kindled
Are but deep and few.

Hold me like a crooning mother,
Heal me of the smart;
All mine anguish let me smother
In thy brooding heart.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Angelus

A deep bell that links the downs
To the drowsy air;
Every loop of sound that swoons,
Finds a circle fair,
Whereon it doth rest and fade;
Every stroke that dins is laid
Like a node,
Spinning out the quivering, fine,
Vibrant tendrils of a vine:
(Bim - bim - bim.)
How they wreathe and run,
Silvern as a filmy light,
Filtered from the sun:
The god of sound is out of sight,
And the bell is like a cloud,
Humming to the outer rim,
Low and loud:
(Bim - bim - bim.)
Throwing down the tempered lull,
Fragile, beautiful:
Married drones and overtones,
How we fancy them to swim,
Spreading into shapes that shine,
With the aura of the metals,
Prisoned in the bell,
Fulvous tinted as a shell,
Dreamy, dim,
Deep in amber hyaline:
(Bim - bim - bim.)

Duncan Campbell Scott

At Sea

Three are emerald pools in the sea,
And wing-like flashes of light;
The sea is bound with the heavens
In a large delight.

Night comes out of the east
And rushes down on the sun;
The emerald pools and the light pools
Are darkened and done.

Our boat dips and cleaves onward,
Careless of night or of light,
Following the line of her compass
By her engines' might.

Through the desert of air and of water;
Like the lonely soul of man,
Following her fate to the ending,
Unaware of the hidden plan.

Sure only of battle and longing,
Of the pain and the quest,
And beyond in the darkness somewhere
Sure of her rest.

Duncan Campbell Scott

At the Cedars

You had two girls -- Baptiste --
One is Virginie --
Hold hard -- Baptiste!
Listen to me.

The whole drive was jammed
In that bend at the Cedars,
The rapids were dammed
With the logs tight rammed
And crammed; you might know
The Devil had clinched them below.

We worked three days -- not a budge,
'She's as tight as a wedge, on the ledge,'
Says our foreman;
'Mon Dieu! boys, look here,
We must get this thing clear.'
He cursed at the men
And we went for it then;
With our cant-dogs arow,
We just gave he-yo-ho;
When she gave a big shove
From above.

The gang yelled and tore
For the shore,
The logs gave a grind
Like a wolf's jaws behind,
And as quick as a flash,
With a shove and a crash,
They were down in a mash,
But I and ten more,
All but Isaàc Dufour,
Were ashore.

He leaped on a log in the front of the rush,
And shot out from the bind
While the jam roared behind;
As he floated along
He balanced his pole
And tossed us a song.
But just as we cheered,
Up darted a log from the bottom,
Leaped thirty feet square and fair,
And came down on his own.

He went up like a block
With the shock,
And when he was there
In the air,
Kissed his hand
To the land;

When he dropped
My heart stopped,
For the first logs had caught him
And crushed him;
When he rose in his place
There was blood on his face.

There were some girls, Baptiste,
Picking berries on the hillside,
Where the river curls, Baptiste,
You know -- on the still side
One was down by the water,
She saw Isaàc
Fall back.

She did not scream, Baptiste,
She launched her canoe;
It did seem, Baptiste,
That she wanted to die too,
For before you could think
The birch cracked like a shell
In that rush of hell,
And I saw them both sink --

Baptiste ! --
He had two girls,
One is Virginie,
What God calls the other
Is not known to me.

Duncan Campbell Scott

At The Gill-Nets

Tug at the net,
Haul at the net,
Strip off the quivering fish;
Hid in the mist
The winds whist,
Is like my heart's wish.

What is your wish,
Your heart's wish?
Is it for home on the hills?
Strip off the fish,
The silver fish,
Caught by their rosy gills.

How can I know,
I love you so,
Each little thought I get
Is held so,
It dies you know,
Caught in your heart's net.

Tug at your net,
Your heart's net,
Strip off my silver fancies;
Keep them in rhyme,
For a dull time,
Fragile as frost pansies.

Duncan Campbell Scott

At William Maclennan's Grave

Here where the cypress tall
Shadows the stucco wall,
Bronze and deep,
Where the chrysanthemums blow,
And the roses--blood and snow--
He lies asleep.

Florence dreameth afar;
Memories of foray and war,
Murmur still;
The Certosa crowns with a cold
Cloud of snow and gold
The olive hill.

What has he now for the streams
Born sweet and deep with dreams
From the cedar meres?
Only the Arno's flow,
Turbid, and weary, and slow
With wrath and tears.

What has he now for the song
Of the boatmen, joyous and long,
Where the rapids shine?
Only the sound of toil,
Where the peasants press the soil
For the oil and wine.

Spirit-fellow in sooth
With bold La Salle and Duluth,
And La Vérandrye,--
Nothing he has but rest,
Deep in his cypress nest
With memory.

Hearts of steel and of fire,
Why do ye love and aspire,
When follows
Death--all your passionate deeds,
Garnered with rust and with weeds
In the hollows?

God that hardened the steel,
Bid the flame leap and reel,
Gave us unrest;
We act in the dusk afar,
In a star beyond your star,
His behest.

'We leave you dreams and names
Still we are iron and flames,
Biting and bright;

Into some virgin world,
Champions, we are hurled,
Of venture and fight.'

Here where the shadows fall,
From the cypress by the wall,
Where the roses are--
Here is a dream and a name,
There, like a rose of flame,
Rises--a star.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Avis

With a golden rolling sound
Booming came a bell,
From the aery in the tower
Eagles fell;
So with regal wings
Hurled, and gleaming sound and power,
Sprang the fatal spell.

Ten a storm of burnished doves
Gleaming from the cote
Flurried by the almonry
O'er the moat,--
Fell and soared and fell
With the arc and iris eye
Burning breast and throat.

Avis heard the beaten bell
Break the quiet space,
Gathering softly in the room
Round her face;
And the sound of wings
From the deeps of rosy gloom
Rustled in the place.

Nothing moved along the wall,
Weltered on the floor;
Only in the purple deep,
Streaming o'er,
Came the dream of sound
Silent as the dale of sleep,
Where the dreams are four.

(One of love without a word,
Wan to look upon,
One of fear without a cry,
Cowering stone,
And the dower of life,
Grief without a single sigh,
Pain without a moan.)

"Avis-Avis!" Cried a voice;
Then the voice was mute.
"Avis!" Soft the echo lay
As the lute.
Where she was she fell,
Drowsy as mandragora,
Trancèd to the root.

Then she heard her mother's voice,
Tender as a dove;
Then her lover plain and sigh,
"Avis--Love!"

Like the mavis bird
Calling, calling lonelily
From the eerie grove.

Then she heard within the vast
Closure of the spell,
Rolled and moulded into one
Rounded swell,
All the sounds that ever were
Uttered underneath the sun,
Heard in heaven or hell.

In the arras moved the wind,
And the window cloth
Rippled like a serpent barred,
Gray with wrath;
In the brazier gold
The wan ghost of a rose charred
Fluttered like a moth.

Tranquil lay her darkened eyes
As the pools that keep
Auras dim of fern and frond
Dappled, deep,
Dreamy as the map of Nod;
Moveless was she as a wand
In the wind of sleep.

Then the birds began to cry
From the crannied wall,
Piping as the morning rose
Mystical,
Gray with whistling rain,
Silver with the light that flows
In the interval.

Pallid poplars cast a shade,
Twinkling gray and dun,
Where the wind and water wove
Into one
All the linnet leaves,
Greening from the mere and grove
In the undern sun.

Night fell with the ferny dusk,
Planets paled and grew,
Up, with lily and clarid turns
Throbbing through,
Rose the robin's song,
Heart of home and love that burns beating in the dew.

But she neither moved nor heard,

Trancèd was her breath;
Lip on charmèd lip was laid
(One who saith
"Love-Undone" and falls).
Silent was she as a shade
In the dells of death.

Duncan Campbell Scott

By A Child's Bed

She breathèd deep,
And stepped from out life's stream
Upon the shore of sleep;
And parted from the earthly noise,
Leaving her world of toys,
To dwell a little in a dell of dream.

Then brooding on the love I hold so free,
My fond possessions come to be
Clouded with grief;
These fairy kisses,
This archness innocent,
Sting me with sorrow and disturbed content:
I think of what my portion might have been;
A dearth of blisses,
A famine of delights,
If I had never had what now I value most;
Till all I have seems something I have lost;
A desert underneath the garden shows,
And in a mound of cinders roots the rose.

Here then I linger by the little bed,
Till all my spirit's sphere,
Grows one half brightness and the other dead,
One half all joy, the other vague alarms;
And, holding each the other half in fee,
Floats like the growing moon
That bears implicitly
Her lessening pearl of shadow
Clasped in the crescent silver of her arms.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Christmas Folk-Song

Those who die on Christmas Day
(I heard the triumphant Seraph say)
Will be remembered, for they died
Upon the Holy Christmastide;
When they attain to Paradise,
The Angels with the tranquil Eyes
Will ask if Jesus rules on Earth
The Anniversary of His Birth;
This Question do they ask alway
Of those who die on Christmas Day.

Those who are born on Christmas Day
(I heard the triumphant Seraph say)
Will bring again the Peace on Earth
That came with gentle Christ His Birth;
They may be lowly Folk and poor
Living about the Manger Door,
They may be Kings of Mighty Line,
Their Lives alike will be benign;
To them belongeth Peace alway,
Those who are born on Christmas Day.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Dream Voyageurs

To ports of balm through isles of musk
The gentle airs are leading us;
To curtained calm and tents of dusk,
The wood-wild things unheeding us
Will share their hoards of hardihood,
Cool dew and roots of fern for food,
Frail berries full of the sun's blood.

To planets bland with dales of dream
A tranquil life is leading us,
We shall land from the languid stream,
The musing shades, unheeding us,
Will share their veils of angelhood,
Thoughts that are tranced with mystic food,
Still broodings tinct with a seraph's blood.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Ecstasy

The shore-lark soars to his topmost flight,
Sings at the height where morning springs,
What though his voice be lost in the light,
The light comes dropping from his wings.

Mount, my soul, and sing at the height
Of thy clear flight in the light and the air,
Heard or unheard in the night in the light
Sing there! Sing there!

Duncan Campbell Scott

Elizabeth Speaks

(Aetat Six)

Now every night we light the grate
And I sit up till _really_ late;
My Father sits upon the right,
My Mother on the left, and I
Between them on an ancient chair,
That once belonged to my Great-Gran,
Before my Father was a man.
We sit without another light;
I really, truly never tire
Watching that space, as black as night,
That hangs behind the fire;
For there sometimes, you know,
The dearest, queerest little sparks,
Without a sound creep to and fro;
Sometimes they form in rings
Or lines that look like many things,
Like skipping ropes, or hoops, or swings:
Before you know what you're about,
They all go out!

My Father says that they are gnomes,
Beyond the grate they have their homes,
In a tall, black, and windy town,
Behind a door we cannot see.
Often when it's time for bed
The children run away instead,
Out through the door to see our fire,
Then their angry parents come
With every candle in the town,
The beadle with his lantern too,
And search and rummage up and down,
To catch the children as they play,
Between the rows of new-mown hay,
And bring them home;
(They must be, O, so very small,
How do they capture them at all?
But then they must be very _dear_);
When they can find no more
They blow a horn we cannot hear,
And march with the beadle at their head,
Right through the little open door,
Then close it tight and go to bed.

My Mother says that may be so;
(They both agree they're _gnomes_, you know).
She says, she thinks that every night,
The gnomes have had a fearful fight;
Their valiant General has been slain,
And all the soldiers leave the camp

To dig his grave upon the plain;
They drag the General on a gun;
Every bandsman has a lamp
And there's a torch for every one,
They dig his grave with bayonets
And wrap him grandly in his flag,
Then they gather in a ring,
The band plays very soft and low,
And all the soldiers sing.
(Of course we cannot hear, you know,)
Then some one calls 'The enemy comes!'
They muffle up their pipes and drums;
Every soldier in a fright
Puts out his light.
Then hand in hand, and very still,
They clamber up the dark, dark hill
And hold their breath tight--tight.

(I'd like to know which tale is right.)

O! there is something I forgot!
Sometimes one little spark burns on
Long after the rest have gone.

My Father says that lamp is left
By a little crooked, crotchety man,
Who cannot find his wayward son;
When the horn begins to blow,
He has to drop his light and run.
Of course he limps so slow
He squeezes through the very last,
When he is gone the naughty scamp
Jumps up and puff! out goes the lamp.

My Mother says that is the light,
Borne by the very bravest knight;
He is so very, very brave,
He would not leave his General's grave,
And when the Enemy General tries
To make him tell where his General lies,
He answers boldly, 'I--will--not!'
Then they shoot him on the spot,
And give a horrid, dreadful shout,
And then of course his light goes out.

I sit and think when they are through,
Which tale I like best of the two.
Sometimes I like the _Father_ one;
It is such fun!
But then I love the _Mother_ one,
That dear brave soldier and the rest:--
Now which one do you like the best?

Duncan Campbell Scott

Enigma

Some men are born to gather women's tears,
To give a harbour to their timorous fears,
To take them as the dry earth takes the rain,
As the dark wood the warm wind from the plain;
Yet their own tears remain unshed,
Their own tumultuous fears unsaid,
And, seeming steadfast as the forest and the earth
Shaken are they with pain.
They cry for voice as earth might cry for the sea
Or the wood for consuming fire;
Unanswered they remain
Subject to the sorrows of women utterly -
Heart and mind,
Subject as the dry earth to the rain
Or the dark wood to the wind.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Fantasia

Here in Samarcand they offer emeralds,
Pure as frozen drops of sea-water,
Rubies, pale as dew-ponds stained with slaughter,
Where the fairies fought for a king's daughter
In the elfin upland.
Here they sell you jade and calcedony,
And the matrix of the turquoise,
Spheres of onyx held in eagles' claws,
But they keep the gems as far asunder
From the dull stones as the lightning from the thunder;
They can never come together
On the mats of Turkish leather
In the booths of Samarcand.

Here they sell you balls of nard and honey,
And squat jars of clarid butter,
And the cheese from Kurdistan.
When you offer Frankish money,
Then they scowl and curse and mutter,
Deep in Kurdish or Persan
For they want your heart out and my hand
In the booths of Samarcand.

They would sell your heart's blood separate,
In a jar with a gold brim,
With a text of burning hatred
Coiled around the rim;
They would sell my hand upon a beam of teak wood,
In the other scale a feather curled;
They would sell your heart upon a silver balance
Weighed against the world.
But your heart could never touch my hand,
They could never come together
On the mats of Turkish leather
In the booths of Samarcand.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Feuilles D'Automne

Gather the leaves from the forest
And blow them over the world,
The wind of winter follows
The wind of autumn furled.

Only the beech tree cherishes
A leaf or two for ruth,
Their stems too tough for the tempest,
Like thoughts of love and of youth.

You may sit by the fire and ponder
While darkness veils the pane,
And fear that your memories are rushing away
In the wind and the rain.

But you'll find them in the quiet
When the clouds race with the moon,
Making the tender silver sound
Of a beech in the month of June.

For you cannot rob the memory
Of the leaves it loves the best;
The wind of time may harry them,
It rushes away with the rest.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Fragment Of An Ode To Canada

This is the land!
It lies outstretched a vision of delight,
Bent like a shield between the silver seas
It flashes back the hauteur of the sun;
Yet teems with humblest beauties, still a part
Of its Titanic and ebullient heart.

Land of the glacial, lonely mountain ranges,
Where nothing haps save vast Æonian changes,
The slow moraine, the avalanche's wings,
Summer and Sun,--the elemental things,
Pulses of Awe,--Winter and Night and the lightnings.
Land of the pines that rear their dusky spars
A ready midnight for the earliest stars.
The land of rivers, rivulets, and rills,
Straining incessant everyway to the sea
With their white thunder harnessed in the mills,
Turning one wealth to another wealth perpetually;
Spinning the lightning with dynamic spindles,
Till some far city dowered with fire enkindles.

The land of fruit, fine-flavoured with the frost,
Land of the cattle, the deep-chested host,
The happy-souled, that contemplate the hours,
Their dew-laps buried in the grass and flowers.
And, O! the myriad-miracle of the grain
Cresting the hill, brimming the level plain,
The miracle of the flower and milk and kernel,
Nurtured by sun-fire and frost-fire supernal,
Until the farmer turns it in his hand,
The million-millioned miracle of the land.

And yet with all these pastoral and heroic graces,
Our simplest flowers wear the loveliest faces;
The sparrows are our most enraptured singers,
And round their songs the fondest memory lingers;
Our forests tower and tremble, star-enchanted,
Their roots are by the timid spirits haunted
Of hermit thrushes,--trancèd is the air,
Ever in doubt when they shall sing or where;
The mountains may with ice and avalanche wrestle,
Far down their rugged steeps dimple and nestle
The still, translucent, turquoise-hearted tarns.

* * * * *

And Thou, O Power, that 'stablishest the Nation,
Give wisdom in the midst of our elation;
Who are so free that we forget we are--
That freedom brings the deepest obligation:
Grant us this presage for a guiding star,
To lead the van of Peace, not with a craven spirit,

But with the consciousness that we inherit
What built the Empire out of blood and fire,
And can smite, too, in passion and with ire.
Purge us of Pride, who are so quick in vaunting
Thy gift, this land, that is in nothing wanting;
Give Mind to match the glory of the gift,
Give great Ideals to bridge the sordid rift
Between our heritage and our use of it.

Then in some day of terror for the world,
When all the flags of the Furies are unfurled,
When Truth and Justice, wildered and unknit,
Shall turn for help to this young, radiant land,
We shall be quick to see and understand:
What shall we answer in that stricken hour?
Shall the deep thought be pregnant then with power?
Shall the few words spring swift and grave and clear?
Use well the present moment. They shall hear.

Duncan Campbell Scott

From Beyond

Here there is balm for every tender heart
Wounded by life;
Rest for each one who bore a valiant part
Crushed in the strife.

I suffered there and held a losing fight
Even to the grave;
And now I know that it was very right
To suffer and be brave.

Duncan Campbell Scott

From 'Lines In Memory Of Edmund Morris'

HERE Morris, on the plains that we have loved,
Think of the death of Akoose, fleet of foot,
Who, in his prime, a herd of antelope
From sunrise, without rest, a hundred miles
Drove through rank prairie, loping like a wolf,
Tired them and slew them, ere the sun went down.
Akoose, in his old age, blind from the smoke
Of tepees and the sharp snow light, alone
With his great grandchildren, withered and spent,
Crept in the warm sun along a rope
Stretched for his guidance. Once when sharp autumn
Made membranes of thin ice upon the sloughs,
He caught a pony on a quick return
Of prowess, and, all his instincts cleared and quickened,
He mounted, sensed the north and bore away
To the Last Mountain Lake where in his youth
He shot the sand-hill-cranes with his flint arrows.
And for these hours in all the varied pomp
Of pagan fancy and free dreams of foray
And crude adventure, he ranged on entranced,
Until the sun blazed level with the prairie,
Then paused, faltered and slid from off his pony.
In a little bluff of poplars, hid in the bracken,
He lay down; the populace of leaves
In the lithe poplars whispered together and trembled,
Fluttered before a sunset of gold smoke,
With interspaces, green as sea water,
And calm as the deep water of the sea.

There Akoose lay, silent amid the bracken,
Gathered at last with the Algonquin Chieftains.
Then the tenebrous sunset was blown out,
And all the smoky gold turned into cloud wrack.
Akoose slept forever amid the poplars,
Swathed by the wind from the far-off Red Deer
Where dinosaurs sleep, clamped in their rocky tombs.
Who shall count the time that lies between
The sleep of Akoose and the dinosaurs?
Innumerable time, that yet is like the breath
Of the long wind that creeps upon the prairie
And dies away with the shadows at sundown.

. . . . . .

What we may think, who brood upon the theme,
Is, when the old world, tired of spinning, has fallen
Asleep, and all the forms, that carried the fire
Of life, are cold upon her marble heart–
Like ashes on the altar–just as she stops,
That something will escape of soul or essence,–
The sum of life, to kindle otherwhere:
Just as the fruit of a high sunny garden,

Grown mellow with autumnal sun and rain,
Shrivelled with ripeness, splits to the rich heart,
And looses a gold kernel to the mould,
So the old world, hanging long in the sun,
And deep enriched with effort and with love,
Shall, in the motions of maturity,
Wither and part, and the kernel of it all
Escape, a lovely wraith of spirit, to latitudes
Where the appearance, throated like a bird,
Winged with fire and bodied all with passion,
Shall flame with presage, not of tears, but joy.

Duncan Campbell Scott

From Shadow

Now the November skies,
And the clouds that are thin and gray,
That drop with the wind away;
A flood of sunlight rolls,
In a tide of shallow light,
Gold on the land and white
On the water, dim and warm in the wood;
Then it is gone, and the wan
Clear of the shade
Covers fields and barren and glade.
The peace of labor done,
Is wide in the gracious earth;
The harvest is won;
Past are the tears and the mirth;
And we feel in the tenuous air
How far beyond thought or prayer
Is the grace of silent things,
That work for the world alway,
Neither for fear nor for pay,
And when labor is over, rest.

The moil of our fretted life
Is borne anew to the soul,
Borne with its cark and strife,
Its burden of care and dread,
Its glories elusive and strange;
And the weight of the weary whole
Presses it down, till we cry:
Where is the fruit of our deeds?
Why should we struggle to build
Towers against death on the plain?
All things possess their lives
Save man, whose task and desire
Transcend his power and his will.

The question is over and still;
Nothing replies: but the earth
Takes on a lovelier hue
From a cloud that neighbored the sun,
That the sun burned down and through,
Till it glowed like a seraph's wing;
The fields that were gray and dun
Are warm in the flowing light;
Fair in the west the night
Strikes in with vibrant star.

Something has stirred afar
In the shadow that winter flings;
A message comes up to the soul
From the soul of inanimate things:
A message that widens and grows
Till it touches the deeds of man,

Till we see in the torturous throes
Some dawning glimmer of plan;
Till we feel in the deepening night
The hand of the angel Content,
That stranger of calmness and light,
With his brow over us bent,
Who moves with his eyes on the earth,
Whose robe of lambent green,
A tissue of herb and its sheen,
Tells the mother who gave him birth.
The message plays through his power,
Till it flames exultant in thought,
As the quince-tree triumphs in flower.
The fruit that is checked and marred
Goes under the sod:
The good lives here in the world;
It persists,-- it is God.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Frost Magic

I

Now, in the moonrise, from a wintry sky,
The frost has come to charm with elfin might
This quiet room; to draw with symbols bright
Faces and forms in fairest charactery
Upon the casement; all the thoughts that lie
Deep hidden in my heart's core he would tell,
How the red shoots of fancy strike and swell,
How they are watered, what soil nourished by.

With eerie power he piles his atomies,
Incrusted gems, star-glances overborne
With lids of sleep pulled from the moth's bright eyes,
And forests of frail ferns, blanched and forlorn,
Where Oberon of unimagined size
Might in the silver silence wind his horn.

II

With these alone he draws in magic lines,
Faces that people dreams, and chiefly one
Happy and brilliant as the northern sun,
And by its darling side there gleams and shines
One of God's children with the laughing signs
Of dimples, and glad accents, and sweet cries,
That angels are and heaven's memories:
The wizard thus my soul's estate divines;

All it holds dear he sets alone apart,
Etches the past in likeness of dim groves
Silvered in quiet rime and with rare art,
In crystal spoils and fairy treasure-troves,
He draws the picture of the happy heart,
By those who love it most, whom most it loves.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Improvisation On An Old Song

(The refrain is quoted by Edward Fitzgerald in
one of his letters)

I

Growing, growing, all the glory going;
Flashing out of fire and light, burning to a husk,
All the world's a-dying and failing in the dusk--
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

Rust is on the door-latch, ashes at the root,
Dry rot in the ridge-pole, canker in the fruit;
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

Plot, ye subtle statesmen,--a trace of melted wax;
Bind, ye haughty prelates,--a thread of ravelled flax;
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

March, ye mighty captains,--an eddy in the dust;
Rave, ye furious lovers,--a stain of crimson rust;
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

Pictures, poems, music--their essential soul,
Idle as dry roses in a silver bowl;
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

London is a hearsay, Paris but a myth,
Rome a wand of sweet-flag withered to the pith;
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

Palsy shakes the planets, frost has chilled the sun,
In a crushing silence the All is dead and done.
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

II

Going, going, all the glory growing,
See it stir and flutter; that is singing, hark!
Singing in the caverns of the primal dark.
Going, going, all the glory growing.

What is in the making, what immortal plan
Draws to its unfolding? 'Tis the Soul of man.
Going, going, all the glory growing.

See it mount and hover, singing as it goes,
Battling with the darkness, nourished by its woes;
Going, going, all the glory growing.

The bale-fires of midnight glaring in its eyes,
Past the phantom shadows see it rush and rise;

Going, going, all the glory growing.

The supernal morning on its dewy wings,
Soaring and scorning the lust of earthy things;
Going, going, all the glory growing.

The beatific noontide on its eager breast
Springing and singing to its halcyon rest;
Going, going, all the glory growing.

In its starry vesture not a vestige of the sod,
Winging still and singing to the heart of God.
Going, going, all the glory growing.

Duncan Campbell Scott

In Snow-Time

I have seen things that charmed the heart to rest:
Faint moonlight on the towers of ancient towns,
Flattering the soul to dream of old renowns;
The first clear silver on the mountain crest
Where the lone eagle by his chilly nest
Called the lone soul to brood serenely free;
Still pools of sunlight shimmering in the sea,
Calm after storm, wherein the storm seemed blest.

But here a peace deeper than peace is furled,
Enshrined and chaliced from the changeful hour;
The snow is still, yet lives in its own light.
Here is the peace which brooded day and night,
Before the heart of man with its wild power
Had ever spurned or trampled the great world.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Life And Death

I THOUGHT of death beside the lonely sea
That went beyond the limit of my sight,
Seeming the image of his mastery,
The semblance of his huge and gloomy might.

But firm beneath the sea went the great earth,
With sober bulk and adamantine hold,
The water but a mantle for her girth,
That played about her splendor fold on fold.

And life seemed like this dear familiar shore
That stretched from the wet sand's last wavy crease,
Beneath the sea's remote and sombre roar,
To inland stillness and the wilds of peace.

Death seems triumphant only here and there;
Life is the sovereign presence everywhere.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Lines In Memory Of Edmund Morris

Dear Morris--here is your letter--
Can my answer reach you now?
Fate has left me your debtor,
You will remember how;
For I went away to Nantucket,
And you to the Isle of Orleans,
And when I was dawdling and dreaming
Over the ways and means
Of answering, the power was denied me,
Fate frowned and took her stand;
I have your unanswered letter
Here in my hand.
This--in your famous scribble,
It was ever a cryptic fist,
Cuneiform or Chaldaic
Meanings held in a mist.

Dear Morris, (now I'm inditing
And poring over your script)
I gather from the writing,
The coin that you had flipt,
Turned tails; and so you compel me
To meet you at Touchwood Hills:
Or, mayhap, you are trying to tell me
The sum of a painter's ills:
Is that Phimister Proctor
Or something about a doctor?
Well, nobody knows, but Eddie,
Whatever it is I'm ready.

For our friendship was always fortunate
In its greetings and adieux,
Nothing flat or importunate,
Nothing of the misuse
That comes of the constant grinding
Of one mind on another.
So memory has nothing to smother,
But only a few things captured
On the wing, as it were, and enraptured.
Yes, Morris, I am inditing--
Answering at last it seems,
How can you read the writing
In the vacancy of dreams?

I would have you look over my shoulder
Ere the long, dark year is colder,
And mark that as memory grows older,
The brighter it pulses and gleams.
And if I should try to render
The tissues of fugitive splendour
That fled down the wind of living,
Will they read it some day in the future,

And be conscious of an awareness
In our old lives, and the bareness
Of theirs, with the newest passions
In the last fad of the fashions?

* * * * *

How often have we risen without daylight
When the day star was hidden in mist,
When the dragon-fly was heavy with dew and sleep,
And viewed the miracle pre-eminent, matchless,
The prelusive light that quickens the morning.
O crystal dawn, how shall we distill your virginal freshness
When you steal upon a land that man has not sullied with his intrusion,
When the aboriginal shy dwellers in the broad solitudes
Are asleep in their innumerable dens and night haunts
Amid the dry ferns, in the tender nests
Pressed into shape by the breasts of the Mother birds?
How shall we simulate the thrill of announcement
When lake after lake lingering in the starlight
Turn their faces towards you,
And are caressed with the salutation of colour?

How shall we transmit in tendril-like images,
The tenuous tremor in the tissues of ether,
Before the round of colour buds like the dome of a shrine,
The preconscious moment when love has fluttered in the bosom,
Before it begins to ache?

How often have we seen the even
Melt into the liquidity of twilight,
With passages of Titian splendour,
Pellucid preludes, exquisitely tender,
Where vanish and revive, thro' veils of the ashes of roses,
The crystal forms the breathless sky discloses.

The new moon a slender thing,
In a snood of virgin light,
She seemed all shy on venturing
Into the vast night.

Her own land and folk were afar,
She must have gone astray,
But the gods had given a silver star,
To be with her on the way.

* * * * *

I can feel the wind on the prairie
And see the bunch-grass wave,
And the sunlights ripple and vary

The hill with Crowfoot's grave,
Where he 'pitched off' for the last time
In sight of the Blackfoot Crossing,
Where in the sun for a pastime
You marked the site of his tepee
With a circle of stones. Old Napiw
Gave you credit for that day.
And well I recall the weirdness
Of that evening at Qu'Appelle,
In the wigwam with old Sakimay,
The keen, acrid smell,
As the kinnikinick was burning;
The planets outside were turning,
And the little splints of poplar
Flared with a thin, gold flame.
He showed us his painted robe
Where in primitive pigments
He had drawn his feats and his forays,
And told us the legend
Of the man without a name,
The hated Blackfoot,
How he lured the warriors,
The young men, to the foray
And they never returned.
Only their ghosts
Goaded by the Blackfoot
Mounted on stallions:
In the night time
He drove the stallions
Reeking into the camp;
The women gasped and whispered,
The children cowered and crept,
And the old men shuddered
Where they slept.
When Sakimay looked forth
He saw the Blackfoot,
And the ghosts of the warriors,
And the black stallions
Covered by the night wind
As by a mantle.

* * * * *

I remember well a day,
When the sunlight had free play,
When you worked in happy stress,
While grave Ne-Pah-Pee-Ness
Sat for his portrait there,
In his beaded coat and his bare
Head, with his mottled fan
Of hawk's feathers, A Man!
Ah Morris, those were the times

When you sang your inconsequent rhymes
Sprung from a careless fountain:

'_He met her on the mountain,
He gave her a horn to blow,
And the very last words he said to her
Were, 'Go 'long, Eliza, go.'_'

Foolish,--but life was all,
And under the skilful fingers
Contours came at your call--
Art grows and time lingers;--
But now the song has a change
Into something wistful and strange.
And one asks with a touch of ruth
What became of the youth
And where did Eliza go?
He met her on the mountain,
He gave her a horn to blow,
The horn was a silver whorl
With a mouthpiece of pure pearl,
And the mountain was all one glow,
With gulfs of blue and summits of rosy snow.
The cadence she blew on the silver horn
Was the meaning of life in one phrase caught,
And as soon as the magic notes were born,
She repeated them once in an afterthought.
They heard in the crystal passes,
The cadence, calling, calling,
And faint in the deep crevasses,
The echoes falling, falling.
They stood apart and wondered;
Her lips with a wound were aquiver,
His heart with a sword was sundered,
For life was changed forever
When he gave her the horn to blow:
But a shadow arose from the valley,
Desolate, slow and tender,
It hid the herdsmen's chalet,
Where it hung in the emerald meadow,
(Was death driving the shadow?)
It quenched the tranquil splendour
Of the colour of life on the glow-peaks,
Till at the end of the even,
The last shell-tint on the snow-peaks
Had passed away from the heaven.
And yet, when it passed, victorious,
The stars came out on the mountains,
And the torrents gusty and glorious,
Clamoured in a thousand fountains,
And even far down in the valley,
A light re-discovered the chalet.

The scene that was veiled had a meaning,
So deep that none might know;
Was it here in the morn on the mountain,
That he gave her the horn to blow?

* * * * *

Tears are the crushed essence of this world,
The wine of life, and he who treads the press
Is lofty with imperious disregard
Of the burst grapes, the red tears and the murk.
But nay! that is a thought of the old poets,
Who sullied life with the passional bitterness
Of their world-weary hearts. We of the sunrise,
Joined in the breast of God, feel deep the power
That urges all things onward, not to an end,
But in an endless flow, mounting and mounting,
Claiming not overmuch for human life,
Sharing with our brothers of nerve and leaf
The urgence of the one creative breath,--
All in the dim twilight--say of morning,
Where the florescence of the light and dew
Haloes and hallows with a crown adorning
The brows of life with love; herein the clue,
The love of life--yea, and the peerless love
Of things not seen, that leads the least of things
To cherish the green sprout, the hardening seed;
Here leans all nature with vast Mother-love,
Above the cradled future with a smile.
Why are there tears for failure, or sighs for weakness,
While life's rhythm beats on? Where is the rule
To measure the distance we have circled and clomb?
Catch up the sands of the sea and count and count
The failures hidden in our sum of conquest.
Persistence is the master of this life;
The master of these little lives of ours;
To the end--effort--even beyond the end.

* * * * *

Here, Morris, on the plains that we have loved,
Think of the death of Akoose, fleet of foot,
Who, in his prime, a herd of antelope
From sunrise, without rest, a hundred miles
Drove through rank prairie, loping like a wolf,
Tired them and slew them, ere the sun went down.
Akoose, in his old age, blind from the smoke
Of tepees and the sharp snow light, alone
With his great grandchildren, withered and spent,
Crept in the warm sun along a rope
Stretched for his guidance. Once when sharp autumn
Made membranes of thin ice upon the sloughs,

He caught a pony on a quick return
Of prowess and, all his instincts cleared and quickened,
He mounted, sensed the north and bore away
To the Last Mountain Lake where in his youth
He shot the sand-hill-cranes with his flint arrows.
And for these hours in all the varied pomp
Of pagan fancy and free dreams of foray
And crude adventure, he ranged on entranced,
Until the sun blazed level with the prairie,
Then paused, faltered and slid from off his pony.
In a little bluff of poplars, hid in the bracken,
He lay down; the populace of leaves
In the lithe poplars whispered together and trembled,
Fluttered before a sunset of gold smoke,
With interspaces, green as sea water,
And calm as the deep water of the sea.

There Akoose lay, silent amid the bracken,
Gathered at last with the Algonquin Chieftains.
Then the tenebrous sunset was blown out,
And all the smoky gold turned into cloud wrack.
Akoose slept forever amid the poplars,
Swathed by the wind from the far-off Red Deer
Where dinosaurs sleep, clamped in their rocky tombs.
Who shall count the time that lies between
The sleep of Akoose and the dinosaurs?
Innumerable time, that yet is like the breath
Of the long wind that creeps upon the prairie
And dies away with the shadows at sundown.

* * * * *

What we may think, who brood upon the theme,
Is, when the old world, tired of spinning, has fallen
Asleep, and all the forms, that carried the fire
Of life, are cold upon her marble heart--
Like ashes on the altar--just as she stops,
That something will escape of soul or essence,--
The sum of life, to kindle otherwhere:
Just as the fruit of a high sunny garden,
Grown mellow with autumnal sun and rain,
Shrivelled with ripeness, splits to the rich heart,
And looses a gold kernel to the mould,
So the old world, hanging long in the sun,
And deep enriched with effort and with love,
Shall, in the motions of maturity,
Wither and part, and the kernel of it all
Escape, a lovely wraith of spirit, to latitudes
Where the appearance, throated like a bird,
Winged with fire and bodied all with passion,
Shall flame with presage, not of tears, but joy.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Madonna With Two Angels

Under the sky without a stain
The long, ripe, rippling of the grain;
Light, broadcast from the golden oats
Over the blackberry fences floats.
Madonna sits in a cedar chair
Tranquillized by the warm, still air;
One of the angels asleep on her knee
Under the shade of an apple tree.
The other angel holds a doll,
Covered warm in a tiny shawl;
The toy is supposed to be fast asleep
As the sister angel: in dimples deep
The grave, sweet charm on the baby face
Repeats the look of maturer grace
That hovers about Madonna's eyes,
One of the heavenly mysteries
From far ethereal latitudes
Where neither doubt nor trouble intrudes.
Ponder here in the orchard nest
On the truth of life made manifest:
The struggle and effort was all to prove
That the best of the world is home and love.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Meditation At Perugia

The sunset colours mingle in the sky,
And over all the Umbrian valleys flow;
Trevi is touched with wonder, and the glow
Finds high Perugia crimson with renown;
Spello is bright;
And, ah! St. Francis, thy deep-treasured town,
Enshrined Assisi, fully fronts the light.

This valley knew thee many a year ago;
Thy shrine was built by simpleness of heart;
And from the wound called life thou drew'st the smart:
Unquiet kings came to thee and the sad poor--
Thou gavest them peace;
Far as the Sultan and the Iberian shore
Thy faith and abnegation gave release.

Deeper our faith, but not so sweet as thine;
Wider our view, but not so sanely sure;
For we are troubled by the witching lure
Of Science, with her lightning on the mist;
Science that clears,
Yet never quite discloses what she wist,
And leaves us half with doubts and half with fears.

We act her dreams that shadow forth the truth,
That somehow here the very nerves of God
Thrill the old fires, the rocks, the primal sod;
We throw our speech upon the open air,
And it is caught
Far down the world, to sing and murmur there;
Our common words are with deep wonder fraught.

Shall not the subtle spirit of man contrive
To charm the tremulous ether of the soul,
Wherein it breathes?--until, from pole to pole,
Those who are kin shall speak, as face to face,
From star to star,
Even from earth to the most secret place,
Where God and the supreme archangels are.

Shall we not prove, what thou hast faintly taught,
That all the powers of earth and air are one,
That one deep law persists from mole to sun?
Shall we not search the heart of God and find
That law empearled,
Until all things that are in matter and mind
Throb with the secret that began the world?

Yea, we have journeyed since thou trod'st the road,
Yet still we keep the foreappointed quest;
While the last sunset smoulders in the West,
Still the great faith with the undying hope

Upsprings and flows,
While dim Assisi fades on the wide slope
And the deep Umbrian valleys fill with rose.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Mid-August

From the upland hidden,
Where the hill is sunny
Tawny like pure honey
In the August heat,
Memories float unbidden
Where the thicket serries
Fragrant with ripe berries
And the milk-weed sweet.

Like a prayer-mat holy
Are the patterned mosses
Which the twin-flower crosses
With her flowerless vine;
In fragile melancholy
The pallid ghost flowers hover
As if to guard and cover
The shadow of a shrine.

Where the pine-linnet lingered
The pale water searches,
The roots of gleaming birches
Draw silver from the lake;
The ripples, liquid-fingered,
Plucking the root-layers,
Fairy like lute players
Lulling music make.

O to lie here brooding
Where the pine-tree column
Rises dark and solemn
To the airy lair,
Where, the day eluding,
Night is couched dream laden,
Like a deep witch-maiden
Hidden in her hair.

In filmy evanescence
Wraithlike scents assemble,
Then dissolve and tremble
A little until they die;
Spirits of the florescence
Where the bees searched and tarried
Till the blossoms all were married
In the days before July.

Light has lost its splendour,
Light refined and sifted,
Cool light and dream drifted
Ventures even where,
(Seeping silver tender)
In the dim recesses,
Trembling mid her tresses,

Hides the maiden hair.

Covered with the shy-light,
Filling in the hushes,
Slide the tawny thrushes
Calling to their broods,
Hoarding till the twilight
The song that made for noon-days
Of the amorous June days
Preludes and interludes.

The joy that I am feeling
Is there something in it
Unlike the warble the linnet
Phrases and intones?
Or is a like thought stealing
With a rapture fine, free
Through the happy pine tree
Ripening her cones?

In some high existence
In another planet
Where their poets cannot
Know our birds and flowers,
Does the same persistence
Give the dreams they issue
Something like the tissue
Of these dreams of ours?

O to lie athinking--
Moods and whims! I fancy
Only necromancy
Could the web unroll,
Only somehow linking
Beauties that meet and mingle
In this quiet dingle
With the beauty of the whole.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Mist And Frost

Veil-like and beautiful
Gathered the dutiful
Mist in the night,
True to the messaging,
Dreamful and presaging
Vapour and light.

Ghostly and chill it is,
Pallid and still it is,
Sudden uprist;
What is there tragical,
Moving or magical,
Hid in the mist?

Millions of essences,
Fairy-like presences
Formless as yet;
Light-riven spangles,
Crystalline tangles
Floating unset.

Frost will come shepherding
Nowise enjeoparding
Frondage or flower;
Just a degree of it,
Nought can we see of it
Only its power.

Earth like a Swimmer
Plunged into the dimmer
Wave of the night,
Now is uprisen,
An Elysian vision
Of spray and of light.

'Tis the intangible
Delicate frangible
Secret of mist,
Breathing may banish it,
Thought may evanish it,--
Ponder and whist!

Passionless purity,
Calmness in surety
Dwells everywhere,
A winnowed whiteness,
A lunar lightness
Glows in the air.

But in the heart of it
Every least part of it
Blooms with the charm,

Star-shape and frondage
Broken from bondage
Forged into form.

Crystals encrusted,
Diamonds dusted
Line everything,
Tiny the stencillings
Are as the pencillings
On a moth's wing.

And O, what a wonder!
No farther asunder
Than atoms are laid,
The arches and angles
Of star-froth and spangles
Cast their own shade.

Out from the chalices,
The pigmy palaces
Where the tint hides,
Opal and sapphire
Half-pearl and half-fire
The colour slides;

Till the frail miracle
Rapturous lyrical
Flushes and glows
With a wraith of florescence
That tempers or lessens
The light of the snows.

Held all aquiver,--
But now with a shiver
The power of the sun
Dissolves the laces
Of the tender mazes,
All is undone.

But the old Earth brooding,
All wisdom including,
Affirms and assures
That above the material,
Triumphal imperial
Beauty endures.

Duncan Campbell Scott

New Year's Night, 1916

The Earth moans in her sleep
Like an old mother
Whose sons have gone to the war,
Who weeps silently in her heart
Till dreams comfort her.

The Earth tosses
As if she would shake off humanity,
A burden too heavy to be borne,
And free of the pest of intolerable men,
Spin with woods and waters
Joyously in the clear heavens
In the beautiful cool rains,
Bearing gladly the dumb animals,
And sleep when the time comes
Glistening in the remains of sunlight
With marmoreal innocency.

Be comforted, old mother,
Whose sons have gone to the war;
And be assured, O Earth,
Of your burden of passionate men,
For without them who would dream the dreams
That encompass you with glory,
Who would gather your youth
And store it in the jar of remembrance,
Who would comfort your old heart
With tales told of the heroes,
Who would cover your face with the cerecloth
All rustling with stars,
And mourn in the ashes of sunlight,
Mourn your marmoreal innocency?

Duncan Campbell Scott

Night

The night is old, and all the world
Is wearied out with strife;
A long gray mist lies heavy and wan
Above the house of life.

Four stars burn up and are unquelled
By the low, shrunken moon;
Her spirit draws her down and down--
She shall be buried soon.

There is a sound that is no sound,
Yet fine it falls and clear,
The whisper of the spinning earth
To the tranced atmosphere.

An odour lives where once was air,
A strange, unearthly scent,
From the burning of the four great stars
Within the firmament.

The universe, deathless and old,
Breathes, yet is void of breath:
As still as death that seems to move
And yet is still as death.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Night Burial In The Forest

Lay him down where the fern is thick and fair.
Fain was he for life, here lies he low:
With the blood washed clean from his brow and his beautiful hair,
Lay him here in the dell where the orchids grow.

Let the birch-bark torches roar in the gloom,
And the trees crowd up in a quiet startled ring
So lone is the land that in this lonely room
Never before has breathed a human thing.

Cover him well in his canvas shroud, and the moss
Part and heap again on his quiet breast,
What recks he now of gain, or love, or loss
Who for love gained rest?

While she who caused it all hides her insolent eyes
Or braids her hair with the ribbons of lust and of lies,
And he who did the deed fares out like a hunted beast
To lurk where the musk-ox tramples the barren ground
Where the stroke of his coward heart is the only sound.

Haunting the tamarac shade,
Hear them up-thronging
Memories foredoomed
Of strife and of longing:
Haggard or bright
By the tamaracs and birches,
Where the red torch light
Trembles and searches,
The wilderness teems
With inscrutable eyes
Of ghosts that are dreams
Commingled with memories.

Leave him here in his secret ferny tomb,
Withdraw the little light from the ocean of gloom,
He who feared nought will fear aught never,
Left alone in the forest forever and ever.

Then, as we fare on our way to the shore
Sudden the torches cease to roar:
For cleaving the darkness remote and still
Comes a wind with a rushing, harp-like thrill,
The sound of wings hurled and furled and unfurled,
The wings of the Angel who gathers the souls from the wastes of the world.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon

Here in the midnight, where the dark mainland and island
Shadows mingle in shadow deeper, profounder,
Sing we the hymns of the churches, while the dead water
Whispers before us.

Thunder is travelling slow on the path of the lightning;
One after one the stars and the beaming planets
Look serene in the lake from the edge of the storm-cloud,
Then have they vanished.

While our canoe, that floats dumb in the bursting thunder,
Gathers her voice in the quiet and thrills and whispers,
Presses her prow in the star-gleam, and all her ripple
Lapses in blackness.

Sing we the sacred ancient hymns of the churches,
Chanted first in old-world nooks of the desert,
While in the wild, pellucid Nipigon reaches
Hunted the savage.

Now have the ages met in the Northern midnight,
And on the lonely, loon-haunted Nipigon reaches
Rises the hymn of triumph and courage and comfort,
Adeste Fideles.

Tones that were fashioned when the faith brooded in darkness,
Joined with sonorous vowels in the noble Latin,
Now are married with the long-drawn Ojibwa,
Uncouth and mournful.

Soft with the silver drip of the regular paddles
Falling in rhythm, timed with the liquid, plangent
Sounds from the blades where the whirlpools break and are carried
Down into darkness;

Each long cadence, flying like a dove from her shelter
Deep in the shadow, wheels for a throbbing moment,
Poises in utterance, returning in circles of silver
To nest in the silence.

All wild nature stirs with the infinite, tender
Plaint of a bygone age whose soul is eternal,
Bound in the lonely phrases that thrill and falter
Back into quiet.

Back they falter as the deep storm overtakes them,
Whelms them in splendid hollows of booming thunder,
Wraps them in rain, that, sweeping, breaks and onrushes
Ringing like cymbals.

Duncan Campbell Scott

O Turn Once More

O turn once more!
The meadows where we mused and strayed together
Abound and glow yet with the ruby sorrel;
'Twas there the bluebirds fought and played together,
Their quarrel was a flying bluebird-quarrel;
Their nest is firm still in the burnished cherry,
They will come back there some day and be merry;
O turn once more.

O turn once more!
The spring we lingered at is ever steeping
The long, cool grasses where the violets hide,
Where you awoke the flower-heads from their sleeping
And plucked them, proud in their inviolate pride;
You left the roots, the roots will flower again,
O turn once more and pluck the flower again;
O turn once more.

O turn once more!
We were the first to find the fairy places
Where the tall lady-slippers scarf'd and snooded,
Painted their lovely thoughts upon their faces,
And then, bewitched by their own beauty brooded;
This will recur in some enchanted fashion;
Time will repeat his miracles of passion;
O turn once more.

O turn once more!
What heart is worth the longing for, the winning,
That is not moved by currents of surprise;
Who never breaks the silken thread in spinning,
Shows a bare spindle when the daylight dies;
The constant blood will yet flow full and tender;
The thread will mended be though gossamer-slender;
O turn once more.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Ode for the Keats Centenary

The Muse is stern unto her favoured sons,
Giving to some the keys of all the joy
Of the green earth, but holding even that joy
Back from their life;
Bidding them feed on hope,
A plant of bitter growth,
Deep-rooted in the past;
Truth, 'tis a doubtful art
To make Hope sweeten
Time as it flows;
For no man knows
Until the very last,
Whether it be a sovereign herb that he has eaten,
Or his own heart.

O stern, implacable Muse,
Giving to Keats so richly dowered,
Only the thought that he should be
Among the English poets after death;
Letting him fade with that expectancy,
All powerless to unfold the future!
What boots it that our age has snatched him free
From thy too harsh embrace,
Has given his fame the certainty
Of comradeship with Shakespeare's?
He lies alone
Beneath the frown of the old Roman stone
And the cold Roman violets;
And not our wildest incantation
Of his most sacred lines,
Nor all the praise that sets
Towards his pale grave,
Like oceans towards the moon,
Will move the Shadow with the pensive brow
To break his dream,
And give unto him now
One word! --

When the young master reasoned
That our puissant England
Reared her great poets by neglect,
Trampling them down in the by-paths of Life
And fostering them with glory after death,
Did any flame of triumph from his own fame
Fall swift upon his mind; the glow
Cast back upon the bleak and aching air
Blown around his days -- ?
Happily so!
But he, whose soul was mighty as the soul
Of Milton, who held the vision of the world
As an irradiant orb self-filled with light,
Who schooled his heart with passionate control

To compass knowledge, to unravel the dense
Web of this tangled life, he would weigh slight
As thistledown blown from his most fairy fancy
That pale self-glory, against the mystery,
The wonder of the various world, the power
Of "seeing great things in loneliness."
Where bloodroot in the clearing dwells
Along the edge of snow;
Where, trembling all their trailing bells,
The sensitive twinflowers blow;

Where, searching through the ferny breaks,
The moose-fawns find the springs;
Where the loon laughs and diving takes
Her young beneath her wings;

Where flash the fields of arctic moss
With myriad golden light;
Where no dream-shadows ever cross
The lidless eyes of night;

Where, cleaving a mountain storm, the proud
Eagles, the clear sky won,
Mount the thin air between the loud
Slow thunder and the sun;

Where, to the high tarn tranced and still
No eye has ever seen,
Comes the first star its flame to chill
In the cool deeps of green; --
Spirit of Keats, unfurl thy wings,
Far from the toil and press,
Teach us by these pure-hearted things,
Beauty in loneliness.

Where, in the realm of thought, dwell those
Who oft in pain and penury
Work in the void,
Searching the infinite dark between the stars,
The infinite little of the atom,
Gathering the tears and terrors of this life,
Distilling them to a medicine for the soul;
(And hated for their thought
Die for it calmly;
For not their fears,
Nor the cold scorn of men,
Fright them who hold to truth:)
They brood alone in the intense serene
Air of their passion,
Until on some chill dawn
Breaks the immortal form foreshadowed in their dream,
And the distracted world and men

Are no more what they were.
Spirit of Keats, unfurl thy deathless wings,
Far from the wayward toil, the vain excess,
Teach us by such soul-haunting things
Beauty in loneliness.

The minds of men grow numb, their vision narrows,
The clogs of Empire and the dust of ages,
The lust of power that fogs the fairest pages,
Of the romance that eager life would write,
These war on Beauty with their spears and arrows.
But still is Beauty and of constant power;
Even in the whirl of Time's most sordid hour,
Banished from the great highways,
Afflighted by the tramp of insolent feet,
She hangs her garlands in the by-ways;
Lissome and sweet
Bending her head to hearken and learn
Melody shadowed with melody,
Softer than shadow of sea-fern,
In the green-shadowed sea:
Then, nourished by quietude,
And if the world's mood
Change, she may return
Even lovelier than before. --

The white reflection in the mountain lake
Falls from the white stream
Silent in the high distance;
The mirrored mountains guard
The profile of the goddess of the height,
Floating in water with a curve of crystal light;
When the air, envious of the loveliness,
Rushes downward to surprise,
Confusion plays in the contact,
The picture is overdrawn
With ardent ripples,
But when the breeze, warned of intrusion,
Draws breathless upward in flight,
The vision reassembles in tranquillity,
Reforming with a gesture of delight,
Reborn with the rebirth of calm.

Spirit of Keats, lend us thy voice,
Breaking like surge in some enchanted cave
On a dream-sea-coast,
To summon Beauty to her desolate world.
For Beauty has taken refuge from our life
That grew too loud and wounding;
Beauty withdraws beyond the bitter strife,
Beauty is gone, (Oh where?)
To dwell within a precinct of pure air

Where moments turn to months of solitude;
To live on roots of fern and tips of fern,
On tender berries flushed with the earth's blood.
Beauty shall stain her feet with moss
And dye her cheek with deep nut-juices,
Laving her hands in the pure sluices
Where rainbows are dissolved.
Beauty shall view herself in pools of amber sheen
Dappled with peacock-tints from the green screen
That mingles liquid light with liquid shadow.
Beauty shall breathe the fairy hush
With the chill orchids in their cells of shade,
And hear the invocation of the thrush
That calls the stars into their heaven,
And after even
Beauty shall take the night into her soul.
When the thrill voice goes crying through the wood,
(Oh, Beauty, Beauty!)
Troubling the solitude
With echoes from the lonely world,
Beauty will tremble like a cloistered thing
That hears temptation in the outlands singing,
Will steel her dedicated heart and breathe
Into her inner ear to firm her vow: --
"Let me restore the soul that ye have marred.
O mortals, cry no more on Beauty,
Leave me alone, lone mortals,
Until my shaken soul comes to its own,
Lone mortals, leave me alone!"
(Oh Beauty, Beauty, Beauty!)
All the dim wood is silent as a dream
That dreams of silence.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Off Riviere Du Loup

O ship incoming from the sea
With all your cloudy tower of sail,
Dashing the water to the lee,
And leaning grandly to the gale,

The sunset pageant in the west
Has filled your canvas curves with rose,
And jeweled every toppling crest
That crashes into silver snows!

You know the joy of coming home,
After long leagues to France or Spain
You feel the clear Canadian foam
And the gulf water heave again.

Between these somber purple hills
That cool the sunset's molten bars,
You will go on as the wind wills,
Beneath the river's roof of stars.

You will toss onward toward the lights
That spangle over the lonely pier,
By hamlets glimmering on the heights,
By level islands black and clear.

You will go on beyond the tide,
Through brimming plains of olive sedge,
Through paler shadows light and wide,
The rapids piled along the ledge.

At evening off some reedy bay
You will swing slowly on your chain,
And catch the scent of dewy hay,
Soft blowing from the pleasant plain.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Permanence

Set within a desert lone,
Circled by an arid sea,
Stands a figure carved in stone,
Where a fountain used to be.

Two abraded, pleading hands
Held below a shapeless mouth,
Human-like the fragment stands,
Tortured by perpetual drouth.

Once the form was drenched with spray,
Deluged with the rainbow flushes;
Surplus water dashed away
To the lotus and the rushes.

Time was clothed in rippling fashion,.
Opulence of light and air,
Beauty changing into passion
Every hour and everywhere.

And the yearning of that race
Was for something deep and tender,
Life replete with power, with grace,
Touched with vision and with splendour.

Now no rain dissolves and cools,
Dew is even as a dream,
The enticing far-off pools
In a mirage only seem.

All the traces that remain,
Of the longings of that land,
Are two hands that plead in vain
Filled with burning sand.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Rain and the Robin

A ROBIN in the morning,
In the morning early,
Sang a song of warning,
"There'll be rain, there'll be rain."
Very,very clearly
From the orchard
Came the gentle horning,
"There'll be rain."
But the hasty farmer
Cut his hay down,
Did not heed the charmer
From the orchard,
And the mower's clatter
Ceased at noontide,
For with drip and spatter
Down came the rain.
Then the prophet robin
Hidden in the crab-tree
Railed upon the farmer,
"I told you so, I told you so."
As the rain grew stronger,
And his heart grew prouder,
Notes so full and slow
Coming blither, louder,
"I told you so, I told you so,"
"I told you so."

Duncan Campbell Scott

Rapids at Night

Here at the roots of the mountains,
Between the sombre legions of cedars and tamaracks,
The rapids charge the ravine:
A little light, cast by foam under starlight,
Wavers about the shimmering stems of the birches:
Here rise up the clangorous sounds of battle,
Immense and mournful.
Far above curves the great dome of darkness
Drawn with the limitless lines of the stars and the planets.
Deep at the core of the tumult,
Deeper than all the voices that cry at the surface,
Dwells one fathomless sound,
Under the hiss and cry, the stroke and the plangent clamour.

O human heart that sleeps,
Wild with rushing dreams and deep with sadness!

The abysmal roar drops into almost silence,
While over its sleep play in various cadence
Innumerous voices crashing in laughter;
Then rising calm, overwhelming,
Slow in power,
Rising supreme in utterance,
It sways, and reconquers and floods all the spaces of silence,
One voice, deep with the sadness,
That dwells at the core of all things.
There by a nest in the glimmering birches,
Speaks a thrush as if startled from slumber,
Dreaming of Southern ricefields,
The moted glow of the amber sunlight,
Where the long ripple roves among the reeds.

Above curves the great dome of darkness,
Scored with the limitless lines of the stars and the planets;
Like the strong palm of God,
Veined with the ancient laws,
Holding a human heart that sleeps,
Wild with rushing dreams and deep with the sadness,
That dwells at the core of all things.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Song

Creep into my heart, creep in, creep in,
Afar from the fret, the toil and the din,
Where the spring of love forever flows,
As clear as light and as sweet as the rose;
(Creep into my heart),
Where the dreams never wilt but their tints refine,
Rooted in beautiful thoughts of thine;
Where morn falls cool on the soul, like sleep,
And the nights are tranquil and tranced and deep;
Where the fairest thing of all the fair
Thou art, who hast somehow crept in there,
Deep into my heart,
Deep into my heart.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Spring On Mattagmi

Far in the east the rain-clouds sweep and harry,
Down the long haggard hills, formless and low,
Far in the west the shell-tints meet and marry,
Piled gray and tender blue and roseate snow;
East--like a fiend, the bolt-breasted, streaming
Storm strikes the world with lightning and with hail;
West--like the thought of a seraph that is dreaming,
Venus leads the young moon down the vale.

Through the lake furrow between the gloom and bright'ning
Firm runs our long canoe with a whistling rush,
While Potàn the wise and the cunning Silver Lightning
Break with their slender blades the long clear hush;
Soon shall I pitch my tent amid the birches,
Wise Potàn shall gather boughs of balsam fir,
While for bark and dry wood Silver Lightning searches;
Soon the smoke shall hang and lapse in the moist air.

Soon shall I sleep--if I may not remember
One who lives far away where the storm-cloud went;
May it part and starshine burn in many a quiet ember,
Over her towered city crowned with large content;
Dear God, let me sleep, here where deep peace is,
Let me own a dreamless sleep once for all the years,
Let me know a quiet mind and what heart ease is,
Lost to light and life and hope, to longing and to tears.

Here in the solitude less her memory presses,
Yet I see her lingering where the birches shine,
All the dark cedars are sleep-laden like her tresses,
The gold-moted wood-pools pellucid as her eyen;
Memories and ghost-forms of the days departed
People all the forest lone in the dead of night;
While Potàn and Silver Lightning sleep, the happy-hearted,
Troop they from their fastnesses upon my sight.

Once when the tide came straining from the Lido,
In a sea of flame our gondola flickered like a sword,
Venice lay abroad builded like beauty's credo,
Smouldering like a gorget on the breast of the Lord:
Did she mourn for fame foredoomed or passion shattered
That with a sudden impulse she gathered at my side?
But when I spoke the ancient fates were flattered,
Chill there crept between us the imperceptible tide.

Once I well remember in her twilight garden,
She pulled a half-blown rose, I thought it meant for me,
But poising in the act, and with half a sigh for pardon,
She hid it in her bosom where none may dare to see:
Had she a subtle meaning?--would to God I knew it,
Where'er I am I always feel the rose leaves nestling there,
If I might know her mind and the thought which then flashed through it,

My soul might look to heaven not commissioned to despair.

Though she denied at parting the gift that I besought her,
Just a bit of ribbon or a strand of her hair;
Though she would not keep the token that I brought her,
Proud she stood and calm and marvellously fair;
Yet I saw her spirit--truth cannot dissemble--
Saw her pure as gold, staunch and keen and brave,
For she knows my worth and her heart was all atremble,
Lest her will should weaken and make her heart a slave.

If she could be here where all the world is eager
For dear love with the primal Eden sway,
Where the blood is fire and no pulse is thin or meagre,
All the heart of all the world beats one way!
There is the land of fraud and fame and fashion,
Joy is but a gaud and withers in an hour,
Here is the land of quintessential passion,
Where in a wild throb Spring wells up with power.

She would hear the partridge drumming in the distance,
Rolling out his mimic thunder in the sultry noons;
Hear beyond the silver reach in ringing wild persistence
Reel remote the ululating laughter of the loons;
See the shy moose fawn nestling by its mother,
In a cool marsh pool where the sedges meet;
Rest by a moss-mound where the twin-flowers smother
With a drowse of orient perfume drenched in light and heat:

She would see the dawn rise behind the smoky mountain,
In a jet of colour curving up to break,
While like spray from the iridescent fountain,
Opal fires weave over all the oval of the lake:
She would see like fireflies the stars alight and spangle
All the heaven meadows thick with growing dusk,
Feel the gipsy airs that gather up and tangle
The woodsy odours in a maze of myrrh and musk:

There in the forest all the birds are nesting,
Tells the hermit thrush the song he cannot tell,
While the white-throat sparrow never resting,
Even in the deepest night rings his crystal bell:
O, she would love me then with a wild elation,
Then she must love me and leave her lonely state,
Give me love yet keep her soul's imperial reservation,
Large as her deep nature and fathomless as fate:

Then, if she would lie beside me in the even,
On my deep couch heaped of balsam fir,
Fragrant with sleep as nothing under heaven,
Let the past and future mingle in one blur;
While all the stars were watchful and thereunder

Earth breathed not but took their silent light,
All life withdrew and wrapt in a wild wonder
Peace fell tranquil on the odorous night:

She would let me steal,--not consenting or denying--
One strong arm beneath her dusky hair,
She would let me bare, not resisting or complying,
One sweet breast so sweet and firm and fair;
Then with the quick sob of passion's shy endeavour,
She would gather close and shudder and swoon away,
She would be mine for ever and for ever,
Mine for all time and beyond the judgment day.

Vain is the dream, and deep with all derision--
Fate is stern and hard--fair and false and vain--
But what would life be worth without the vision,
Dark with sordid passion, pale with wringing pain?
What I dream is mine, mine beyond all cavil,
Pure and fair and sweet, and mine for evermore,
And when I will my life I may unravel,
And find my passion dream deep at the red core.

Venus sinks first lost in ruby splendour,
Stars like wood-daffodils grow golden in the night,
Far, far above, in a space entranced and tender,
Floats the growing moon pale with virgin light.
Vaster than the world or life or death my trust is
Based in the unseen and towering far above;
Hold me, O Law, that deeper lies than Justice,
Guide me, O Light, that stronger burns than Love.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Stone Breaking

March wind rough
Clashed the trees,
Flung the snow;
Breaking stones,
In the cold,
Germans slow
Toiled and toiled;
Arrowy sun
Glanced and sprang,
One right blithe
German sang:
Songs of home,
Fatherland:
Syenite hard,
Weary lot,
Callous hand,
All forgot:
Hammers pound,
Ringing round;
Rise the heaps,
To his voice,
Bounds and leaps
Toise on toise:
Toil is long,
But dear God
Gives us song,
At the end
Gives us test,
Toil is best.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Apparition

Gentle angel with your mantle,
All of tender green,
I was yearning for a vision
Of the life unseen.

When you hovered in the sunset,
Just as rain was done;
Where the dropping from the poplars
Seemed like rain begun.

There you gathered forming slowly
Rounding into view:
All your vesture glowed like verdure
When the sap is new.

Then you mutely gave your warning
And I felt the stress
Of its passion and its presage
And its utterness.

There you swayed one tranquil moment,
Mystically fair,
Then you were not of the sunset,
Were not in the air.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Battle Of Lundy's Lane

Rufus Gale speaks--1852

Yes,--in the Lincoln Militia,--in the war of eighteen-twelve;
Many's the day I've had since then to dig and delve--
But those are the years I remember as the brightest years of all,
When we left the plow in the furrow to follow the bugle's call.
Why, even our son Abner wanted to fight with the men!
'Don't you go, d'ye hear, sir!'--I was angry with him then.
'Stay with your mother!' I said, and he looked so old and grim--
He was just sixteen that April--I couldn't believe it was him;
But I didn't think--I was off--and we met the foe again,
Five thousand strong and ready, at the hill by Lundy's Lane.
There as the night came on we fought them from six to nine,
Whenever they broke our line we broke their line,
They took our guns and we won them again, and around the levels
Where the hill sloped up--with the Eighty-ninth,--we fought like devils
Around the flag;--and on they came and we drove them back,
Until with its very fierceness the fight grew slack.

It was then about nine and dark as a miser's pocket,
When up came Hercules Scott's brigade swift as a rocket,
And charged,--and the flashes sprang in the dark like a lion's eyes;
The night was full of fire--groans, and cheers, and cries;
Then through the sound and the fury another sound broke in--
The roar of a great old duck-gun shattered the rest of the din;
It took two minutes to charge it and another to set it free.
Every time I heard it an angel spoke to me;
Yes, the minute I heard it I felt the strangest tide
Flow in my veins like lightning, as if, there, by my side,
Was the very spirit of Valor. But 'twas dark--you couldn't see--
And the one who was firing the duck-gun fell against me
And slid down to the clover, and lay there still;
Something went through me--piercing--with a strange, swift thrill;
The noise fell away into silence, and I heard as clear as thunder
The long, slow roar of Niagara: O the wonder
Of that deep sound. But again the battle broke
And the foe, driven before us desperately--stroke upon stroke,
Left the field to his master, and sullenly down the road
Sounded the boom of his guns, trailing the heavy load
Of his wounded men and his shattered flags, sullen and slow,
Setting fire in his rage to Bridgewater mills and the glow
Flared in the distant forest. We rested as we could,
And for a while I slept in the dark of a maple wood:
But when the clouds in the east were red all over,
I came back there to the place we made the stand in the clover;
For my heart was heavy then with a strange deep pain,
As I thought of the glorious fight, and again and again
I remembered the valiant spirit and the piercing thrill;
But I knew it all when I reached the top of the hill,--
For there, there with the blood on his dear, brave head,
There on the hill in the clover lay our Abner--dead!--

No--thank you--no, I don't need it; I'm solid as granite rock,
But every time that I tell it I feel the old, cold shock,
I'm eighty-one my next birthday--do you breed such fellows now?
There he lay with the dawn cooling his broad fair brow,
That was no dawn for him; and there was the old duck-gun
That many and many's the time,--just for the fun,
We together, alone, would take to the hickory rise,
And bring home more wild pigeons than ever you saw with your eyes.
Up with Hercules Scott's brigade, just as it came on night--
He was the angel beside me in the thickest of the fight--
Wrote a note to his mother--He said, 'I've got to go;
Mother what would home be under the heel of the foe!'
Oh! she never slept a wink, she would rise and walk the floor;
She'd say this over and over, 'I knew it all before!'
I'd try to speak of the glory to give her a little joy.
'What is the glory to me when I want my boy, my boy!'
She'd say, and she'd wring her hands; her hair grew white as snow--
And I'd argue with her up and down, to and fro,
Of how she had mothered a hero, and his was a glorious fate,
Better than years of grubbing to gather an estate.
Sometimes I'd put it this way: 'If God was to say to me now
'Take him back as he once was helping you with the plow,'
I'd say, 'No, God, thank You kindly; 'twas You that he obeyed;
You told him to fight and he fought, and he wasn't afraid;
You wanted to prove him in battle, You sent him to Lundy's Lane,
'Tis well!' But she only would answer over and over again,
'Give me back my Abner--give me back my son!'
It was so all through the winter until the spring had begun,
And the crocus was up in the dooryard, and the drift by the fence
was thinned,
And the sap drip-dropped from the branches wounded by the wind,
And the whole earth smelled like a flower,--then she came to me one
night--
'Rufus!' she said, with a sob in her throat,--'Rufus, you're right.'
I hadn't cried till then, not a tear--but then I was torn in two--
There, it's all right--my eyes don't see as they used to do!

But O the joy of that battle--it was worth the whole of life,
You felt immortal in action with the rapture of the strife,
There in the dark by the river, with the flashes of fire before,
Running and crashing along, there in the dark, and the roar
Of the guns, and the shrilling cheers, and the knowledge that filled
your heart
That there was a victory making and you must do your part,
But--there's his grave in the orchard where the headstone glimmers
white:
We could see it, we thought, from our window even on the darkest
night;
It is set there for a sign that what one lad could do
Would be done by a hundred hundred lads whose hearts were stout and
true.
And when in the time of trial you hear the recreant say,

Shooting his coward lips at us, 'You shall have had your day:
For all your state and glory shall pass like a cloudy wrack,
And here some other flag shall fly where flew the Union Jack,'--
Why tell him a hundred thousand men would spring from these sleepy farms,
To tie that flag in its ancient place with the sinews of their arms;
And if they doubt you and put you to scorn, why you can make it plain,
With the tale of the gallant Lincoln men and the fight at Lundy's Lane.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Beggar And The Angel

An angel burdened with self-pity
Came out of heaven to a modern city.

He saw a beggar on the street,
Where the tides of traffic meet.

A pair of brass-bound hickory pegs
Brought him his pence instead of legs.

A murky dog by him did lie,
Poodle, in part, his ancestry.

The angel stood and thought upon
This poodle-haunted beggar man.

'My life is grown a bore,' said he,
'One long round of sciamachy;

I think I'll do a little good,
By way of change from angelhood.'

He drew near to the beggar grim,
And gravely thus accosted him:

'How would you like, my friend, to fly
All day through the translucent sky;

To knock at the door of the red leaven,
And even to enter the orthodox heaven?

If you would care to know this joy,
I will surrender my employ,

And take your ills, collect your pelf,
An humble beggar like yourself.

For ages you these joys may know,
While I shall suffer here below;

And in the end we both may gain
Access of pleasure from my pain.'

The stationary vagrant said,
'I do not mind, so go ahead.'

The angel told the heavenly charm,
He felt a wing on either arm;

'Good-day,' he said, 'this floating's queer
If I should want to change next year--?'

'Pull out that feather!' the angel said,

'The one half black and the other half red.'

The cripple cried, 'Before you're through
You may get fagged, and if you do,--'

The angel superciliously--
'My transformed friend, don't think of me.

I shall be happy day and night,
In doing what I think is right.'

'So so,' the feathered beggar said,
'Good-bye, I am just overhead.'

* * * * *

The angel when he grasped the dish,
Began to criticize his wish.

The seat was hard as granite rocks,
His real legs were in the box.

His knees were cramped, his shins were sore,
The lying pegs stuck out before.

In vain he clinked the dish and whined.
The passers-by seemed deaf and blind.

As pious looking as Saint Denis,
An urchin stole his catch-penny.

And even the beggar's drab-fleeced poodle
Began to know him for a noodle.

'It has an uncelestial scent,
The clothing of this mendicant;'

He cried, 'That trickling down my spine
Is anything but hyaline.

This day is like a thousand years:
I'd give an age of sighs and tears

To see with his confectioned grin
One cherub sitting on his chin.

That cripple was by far too sly--
I wish he'd tumble from the sky,

That things might be as they were before;
I really cannot stand much more!'

* * * * *

The beggar in the angel's guise,
Rose far above the smoky skies.

But being a beggar, never saw
The charm of the compelling law

That turned the swinging universe:
'Twas gloomy as an empty purse.

Often with heaven in his head,
He blundered on a planet dead.

And when with an immortal fuss,
He singed his wings at Sirius.

He plucked the feather with his teeth,
The charm was potent and beneath,

He saw the turmoil of the way
Grown wilder at the close of day,

With the sad poodle, can in hand,
The angel still at the old stand.

'My friend,' said the angel, hemming and humming,
'Truly I thought you were never coming.'

'That's an unhandsome thing to say,
Seeing I've only been gone a day.

But there's nothing in all your brazen sky
To match the cock of that poodle's eye.

Take your dish and give me my wings,
'Tis but a fair exchange of things.'

* * * * *

The beggar felt his garment's rot,
The horn ridge of each callous spot;

He clinked his can and was content;
His poverty was permanent.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Builder

WHEN the deep cunning architect
Had the great minster planned,
They worked in faith for twice two hundred years
And reared the building grand;
War came and famine and they did not falter,
But held his line,
And filled the space divine
With carvings meet for the soul's eye;
And not alone the chantry and thereby
The snowy altar,
But in every part
They carved the minster after his own heart,
And made the humblest places fair,
Even the dimmest cloister-way and stair,
With vineyard tendrils,
With ocean-seeming shells,
With filmy weeds from sea,
With bell-flowers delicate and bells,
All done minute with excellent tracery.
Come, O my soul,
And let me build thee like the minster fair,
Deep based and large as air,
And full of hidden graces wrought
In faith and infinite thought,
Till all thy dimmest ways,
Shall gleam with little vines and fruits of praise,
So that one day
The consummate Architect
Who planned the souls that we are set to build,
May pause and say:
How curiously wrought is this!
The builder followed well My thought, My chart,
And worked for Me, not for the world's wild heart;
Here are the outward virtues true!
But see how all the inner parts are filled
With singular bliss:
Set it aside
I shall come here again at eventide.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Closed Door

_The dew falls and the stars fall,
The sun falls in the west,
But never more
Through the closed door,
Shall the one that I loved best
Return to me:
A salt tear is the sea,
All earth's air is a sigh,
But they never can mourn for me
With my heart's cry,
For the one that I loved best
Who caressed me with her eyes,
And every morning came to me,
With the beauty of sunrise,
Who was health and wealth and all,
Who never shall answer my call,
While the sun falls in the west,
The dew falls and the stars fall._

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Forgers

IN the smithy it began:
Let's make something for a man!
Hear the bellows belch and roar,
Splashing light on roof and floor:
From their nest the feathery sparks
Fly like little golden larks:
Hear each forger's taunting yell,
Tell–tell–tell–tell–
Tell us what we make, my master!
Hear the tenor hammers sound,
Ring-a-round, ring-a-round;
Hear the treble hammers sing,
Ding-a-ring, ding-a-ring;
Hear the forger's taunting yell,
Tell–tell–tell–tell!
Though the guess be right or wrong
You must wear it all life long!
How it glows as it grows,
Ding-a-ring-a-derry-down,
Into something–is't a crown?
Hear them half in death with laughter,
Shaking soot from roof and rafter;
Tell–tell–tell–tell–
Ding-a-ring, ding-a-ring,
See them round the royal thing,
See it fade to ruby rose,
As it glows and grows,
Guess, they shout, for worse or better:
Not a crown!
Is't a fetter?
Hear them shout demonic mirth:
Here's a guesser something worth;
Make it solid, round, and fine,
Fashioned on a cunning plan,
For the riddle-reader Man;
Ho–ho–ho–ho!
Hear the bellows heave and blow:
Heat dries up their tears of mirth;
Let the marvel come to birth,
Though his guess be right or wrong
He must wear it–all life long!
Sullen flakes of golden fire
Fawn about the dimming choir,
They're a dusky pack of thieves
Shaking rubies from their sleeves,
Hear them wield their vaunting yell,
Tell–tell–tell–tell!
Forging faster–taunting faster–
Guess, my master–Guess, my master!
Grows the enigmatic thing!
Ruddy joyance–Deep disaster?
Ding-a-ring, ding-a-ring,

Ding-a-ring-a-derry-down!
Is't a fetter–Is't a crown?

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Forsaken

I
Once in the winter
Out on a lake
In the heart of the north-land,
Far from the Fort
And far from the hunters,
A Chippewa woman
With her sick baby,
Crouched in the last hours
Of a great storm.
Frozen and hungry,
She fished through the ice
With a line of the twisted
Bark of the cedar,
And a rabbit-bone hook
Polished and barbed;
Fished with the bare hook
All through the wild day,
Fished and caught nothing;
While the young chieftain
Tugged at her breasts,
Or slept in the lacings
Of the warm tikanagan.
All the lake-surface
Streamed with the hissing
Of millions of iceflakes
Hurled by the wind;
Behind her the round
Of a lonely island
Roared like a fire
With the voice of the storm
In the deeps of the cedars.
Valiant, unshaken,
She took of her own flesh,
Baited the fish-hook,
Drew in a gray-trout,
Drew in his fellows,
Heaped them beside her,
Dead in the snow.
Valiant, unshaken,
She faced the long distance,
Wolf-haunted and lonely,
Sure of her goal
And the life of her dear one:
Tramped for two days,
On the third in the morning,
Saw the strong bulk
Of the Fort by the river,
Saw the wood-smoke
Hand soft in the spruces,
Heard the keen yelp
Of the ravenous huskies

Fighting for whitefish:
Then she had rest.

II

Years and years after,
When she was old and withered,
When her son was an old man
And his children filled with vigour,
They came in their northern tour on the verge of winter,
To an island in a lonely lake.
There one night they camped, and on the morrow
Gathered their kettles and birch-bark
Their rabbit-skin robes and their mink-traps,
Launched their canoes and slunk away through the islands,
Left her alone forever,
Without a word of farewell,
Because she was old and useless,
Like a paddle broken and warped,
Or a pole that was splintered.
Then, without a sigh,
Valiant, unshaken,
She smoothed her dark locks under her kerchief,
Composed her shawl in state,
Then folded her hands ridged with sinews and corded with veins,
Folded them across her breasts spent with the nourishment of children,
Gazed at the sky past the tops of the cedars,
Saw two spangled nights arise out of the twilight,
Saw two days go by filled with the tranquil sunshine,
Saw, without pain, or dread, or even a moment of longing:
Then on the third great night there came thronging and thronging
Millions of snowflakes out of a windless cloud;
They covered her close with a beautiful crystal shroud,
Covered her deep and silent.
But in the frost of the dawn,
Up from the life below,
Rose a column of breath
Through a tiny cleft in the snow,
Fragile, delicately drawn,
Wavering with its own weakness,
In the wilderness a sign of the spirit,
Persisting still in the sight of the sun
Till day was done.
Then all light was gathered up by the hand of God and hid in His breast,
Then there was born a silence deeper than silence,
Then she had rest.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Ghost's Story

All my life long I heard the step
Of some one I would know,
Break softly in upon my days
And lightly come and go.

A foot so brisk I said must bear
A heart that's clean and clear;
If that companion blithe would come,
I should be happy here.

But though I waited long and well,
He never came at all,
I grew aweary of the void,
Even of the light foot-fall.

From loneliness to loneliness
I felt my spirit grope--
At last I knew the uttermost,
The loneliness of hope.

And just upon the border land,
Where flesh and spirit part,
I knew the secret foot-fall was
The beating of my heart.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Half-breed Girl

She is free of the trap and the paddle,
The portage and the trail,
But something behind her savage life
Shines like a fragile veil.

Her dreams are undiscovered,
Shadows trouble her breast,
When the time for resting cometh
Then least is she at rest.

Oft in the morns of winter,
When she visits the rabbit snares,
An appearance floats in the crystal air
Beyond the balsam firs.

Oft in the summer mornings
When she strips the nets of fish,
The smell of the dripping net-twine
Gives to her heart a wish.

But she cannot learn the meaning
Of the shadows in her soul,
The lights that break and gather,
The clouds that part and roll,

The reek of rock-built cities,
Where her fathers dwelt of yore,
The gleam of loch and shealing,
The mist on the moor,

Frail traces of kindred kindness,
Of feud by hill and strand,
The heritage of an age-long life
In a legendary land.

She wakes in the stifling wigwam,
Where the air is heavy and wild,
She fears for something or nothing
With the heart of a frightened child.

She sees the stars turn slowly
Past the tangle of the poles,
Through the smoke of the dying embers,
Like the eyes of dead souls.

Her heart is shaken with longing
For the strange, still years,
For what she knows and knows not,
For the wells of ancient tears.

A voice calls from the rapids,
Deep, careless and free,

A voice that is larger than her life
Or than her death shall be.

She covers her face with her blanket,
Her fierce soul hates her breath,
As it cries with a sudden passion
For life or death.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Harvest

Sun on the mountain,
Shade in the valley,
Ripple and lightness
Leaping along the world,
Sun, like a gold sword
Plucked from the scabbard,
Striking the wheat-fields,
Splendid and lusty,
Close-standing, full-headed,
Toppling with plenty;
Shade, like a buckler
Kindly and ample,
Sweeping the wheat-fields
Darkening and tossing;
There on the world-rim
Winds break and gather
Heaping the mist
For the pyre of the sunset;
And still as a shadow,
In the dim westward,
A cloud sloop of amethyst
Moored to the world
With cables of rain.

Acres of gold wheat
Stir in the sunshine,
Rounding the hill-top,
Crested with plenty,
Filling the valley,
Brimmed with abundance,
Wind in the wheat-field
Eddying and settling,
Swaying it, sweeping it,
Lifting the rich heads,
Tossing them soothingly
Twinkle and shimmer
The lights and the shadowings,
Nimble as moonlight
Astir in the mere.
Laden with odors
Of peace and of plenty,
Soft comes the wind
From the ranks of the wheat-field,
Bearing a promise
Of harvest and sickle-time,
Opulent threshing-floors
Dusty and dim
With the whirl of the flail,
And wagons of bread,
Sown-laden and lumbering
Through the gateways of cities.

When will the reapers
Strike in their sickles,
Bending and grasping,
Shearing and spreading;
When will the gleaners
Searching the stubble
Take the last wheat-heads
Home in their arms ?

Ask not the question! -
Something tremendous
Moves to the answer.

Hunger and poverty
Heaped like the ocean
Welters and mutters,
Hold back the sickles!

Millions of children
Born to their mothers' womb,
Starved at the nipple, cry,--
Ours is the harvest!
Millions of women
Learned in the tragical
Secrets of poverty,
Sweated and beaten, cry,--
Hold back the sickles!

Millions of men
With a vestige of manhood,
Wild-eyed and gaunt-throated,
Shout with a leonine
Accent of anger,
Leaves us the wheat-fields!

When will the reapers
Strike in their sickles?
Ask not the question;
Something tremendous
Moves to the answer.

Long have they sharpened
Their fiery, impetuous
Sickles of carnage,
Welded them aeons
Ago in the mountains
Of suffering and anguish;
Hearts were their hammers
Blood was their fire,
Sorrow their anvil,
(Trusty the sickle
Tempered with tears;)

Time they had plenty-
Harvests and harvests
Passed them in agony,
Only a half-filled
Ear for their lot;
Man that has taken
God for a master
Made him a law,
Mocked him and cursed him,
Set up this hunger,
Called it necessity,
Put in the blameless mouth
Juda's language:
The poor ye have with you
Always, unending.
But up from the impotent
Anguish of children,
Up from the labor
Fruitless, unmeaning,
Of millions of mothers,
Hugely necessitous,
Grew by a just law
Stern and implacable,
Art born of poverty,
The making of sickles
Meet for the harvest.

And now to the wheat-fields
Come the weird reapers
Armed with their sickles,
Whipping them keenly
In the fresh-air fields,
Wild with the joy of them,
Finding them trusty,
Hilted with teen.
Swarming like ants,
The Idea for captain,
No banners, no bugles,
Only a terrible
Ground-bass of gathering
Tempest and fury,
Only a tossing
Of arms and of garments;
Sexless and featureless,
(Only the children
Different among them,
Crawling between their feet,
Borne on their shoulders;)
Rolling their shaggy heads
Wild with the unheard-of
Drug of the sunshine;
Tears that had eaten

The half of their eyelids
Dry on their cheeks;
Blood in their stiffened hair
Clouted and darkened;
Down in their cavern hearts
Hunger the tiger,
Leaping, exulting;
Sighs that had choked them
Burst into triumphing;
On they come, Victory!
Up to the wheat-fields,
Dreamed of in visions
Bred by the hunger,
Seen for the first time
Splendid and golden;
On they come fluctuant,
Seething and breaking,
Weltering like fire
In the pit of the earthquake,
Bursting in heaps
With the sudden intractable
Lust of the hunger:
Then when they see them-
The miles of the harvest
White in the sunshine,
Rushing and stumbling,
With the mighty and clamorous
Cry of a people
Starved from creation,
Hurl themselves onward,
Deep in the wheat-fields,
Weeping like children,
After ages and ages,
Back at the mother the earth.
Night in the valley,
Gloom on the mountain,
Wind in the wheat,
Far to the southward
The flutter of lightning,
The shudder of thunder;
But high at the zenith,
A cluster of stars
Glimmers and throbs
In the gasp of the midnight,
Steady and absolute,
Ancient and sure

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Height of Land

Here is the height of land:
The watershed on either hand
Goes down to Hudson Bay
Or Lake Superior;
The stars are up, and far away
The wind sounds in the wood, wearier
Than the long Ojibwa cadence
In which Potàn the Wise
Declares the ills of life
And Chees-que-ne-ne makes a mournful sound
Of acquiescence. The fires burn low
With just sufficient glow
To light the flakes of ash that play
At being moths, and flutter away
To fall in the dark and die as ashes:
Here there is peace in the lofty air,
And Something comes by flashes
Deeper than peace: --
The spruces have retired a little space
And left a field of sky in violet shadow
With stars like marigolds in a water-meadow.

Now the Indian guides are dead asleep;
There is no sound unless the soul can hear
The gathering of the waters in their sources.
We have come up through the spreading lakes
From level to level, --
Pitching our tents sometimes over a revel
Of roses that nodded all night,
Dreaming within our dreams,
To wake at dawn and find that they were captured
With no dew on their leaves;
Sometimes mid sheaves
Of bracken and dwarf-cornel, and again
On a wide blueberry plain
Brushed with the shimmer of a bluebird's wing;
A rocky islet followed
With one lone poplar and a single nest
Of white-throat-sparrows that took no rest
But sang in dreams or woke to sing, --
To the last portage and the height of land --:
Upon one hand
The lonely north enlaced with lakes and streams,
And the enormous targe of Hudson Bay,
Glimmering all night
In the cold arctic light;
On the other hand
The crowded southern land
With all the welter of the lives of men.
But here is peace, and again
That Something comes by flashes
Deeper than peace, -- a spell

Golden and inappellable
That gives the inarticulate part
Of our strange being one moment of release
That seems more native than the touch of time,
And we must answer in chime;
Though yet no man may tell
The secret of that spell
Golden and inappellable.

Now are there sounds walking in the wood,
And all the spruces shiver and tremble,
And the stars move a little in their courses.
The ancient disturber of solitude
Breathes a pervasive sigh,
And the soul seems to hear
The gathering of the waters at their sources;
Then quiet ensues and pure starlight and dark;
The region-spirit murmurs in meditation,
The heart replies in exaltation
And echoes faintly like an inland shell
Ghost tremors of the spell;
Thought reawakens and is linked again
With all the welter of the lives of men.
Here on the uplands where the air is clear
We think of life as of a stormy scene, --
Of tempest, of revolt and desperate shock;
And here, where we can think, on the brights uplands
Where the air is clear, we deeply brood on life
Until the tempest parts, and it appears
As simple as to the shepherd seems his flock:
A Something to be guided by ideals --
That in themselves are simple and serene --
Of noble deed to foster noble thought,
And noble thought to image noble deed,
Till deed and thought shall interpenetrate,
Making life lovelier, till we come to doubt
Whether the perfect beauty that escapes
Is beauty of deed or thought or some high thing
Mingled of both, a greater boon than either:
Thus we have seen in the retreating tempest
The victor-sunlight merge with the ruined rain,
And from the rain and sunlight spring the rainbow.

The ancient disturber of solitude
Stirs his ancestral potion in the gloom,
And the dark wood
Is stifled with the pungent fume
Of charred earth burnt to the bone
That takes the place of air.
Then sudden I remember when and where, --
The last weird lakelet foul with weedy growths
And slimy viscid things the spirit loathes,

Skin of vile water over viler mud
Where the paddle stirred unutterable stenches,
And the canoes seemed heavy with fear,
Not to be urged toward the fatal shore
Where a bush fire, smouldering, with sudden roar
Leaped on a cedar and smothered it with light
And terror. It had left the portage-height
A tangle of slanted spruces burned to the roots,
Covered still with patches of bright fire
Smoking with incense of the fragment resin
That even then began to thin and lessen
Into the gloom and glimmer of ruin.
'Tis overpast. How strange the stars have grown;
The presage of extinction glows on their crests
And they are beautied with impermanence;
They shall be after the race of men
And mourn for them who snared their fiery pinions,
Entangled in the meshes of bright words.

A lemming stirs the fern and in the mosses
Eft-minded things feel the air change, and dawn
Tolls out from the dark belfries of the spruces.
How often in the autumn of the world
Shall the crystal shrine of dawning be rebuilt
With deeper meaning! Shall the poet then,
Wrapped in his mantle on the height of land,
Brood on the welter of the lives of men
And dream of his ideal hope and promise
In the blush sunrise? Shall he base his flight
Upon a more compelling law than Love
As Life's atonement; shall the vision
Of noble deed and noble thought immingled
Seem as uncouth to him as the pictograph
Scratched on the cave side by the cave-dweller
To us of the Christ-time? Shall he stand
With deeper joy, with more complex emotion,
In closer commune with divinity,
With the deep fathomed, with the firmament charted,
With life as simple as a sheep-boy's song,
What lies beyond a romaunt that was read
Once on a morn of storm and laid aside
Memorious with strange immortal memories?
Or shall he see the sunrise as I see it
In shoals of misty fire the deluge-light
Dashes upon and whelms with purer radiance,
And feel the lulled earth, older in pulse and motion,
Turn the rich lands and inundant oceans
To the flushed color, and hear as now I hear
The thrill of life beat up the planet's margin
And break in the clear susurrus of deep joy
That echoes and reëchoes in my being?
O Life is intuition the measure of knowledge

And do I stand with heart entranced and burning
At the zenith of our wisdom when I feel
The long light flow, the long wind pause, the deep
Influx of spirit, of which no man may tell
The Secret, golden and inappellable?

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Leaf

This silver-edged geranium leaf
Is one sign of a bitter grief
Whose symbols are a myriad more;
They cluster round a carven stone
Where she who sleeps is never alone
For two hearts at the core,

Bound with her heart make one of three,
A trinity in unity,
One sentient heart that grieves;
And myriad dark-leaved memories keep
Vigil above the triune sleep,--
Edged all with silver are the leaves.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Lover To His Lass

Crown her with stars, this angel of our planet,
Cover her with morning, this thing of pure delight,
Mantle her with midnight till a mortal cannot
See her for the garments of the light and the night.

How far I wandered, worlds away and far away,
Heard a voice but knew it not in the clear cold,
Many a wide circle and many a wan star away,
Dwelling in the chambers where the worlds were growing old.

Saw them growing old and heard them falling
Like ripe fruit when a tree is in the wind;
Saw the seraphs gather them, their clarion voices calling
In rounds of cheering labour till the orchard floor was thinned.

Saw a whole universe turn to its setting,
Old and cold and weary, gray and cold as death,
But before mine eyes were veiled in forgetting,
Something always caught my soul and held its breath.

Caught it up and held it, now I know the reason;
Governed it and soothed it, now I know why;
Nurtured it and trained it and kept it for the season
When new worlds should blossom in the springtime sky.

How have they blossomed, see the sky is like a garden!
Ah! how fresh the worlds look hanging on the slope!
Pluck one and wear it, Love, and ask the Gardener's pardon,
Pluck out the Pleiads like a spray of heliotrope.

See Aldebaran like a red rose clamber,
See brave Betelgeux pranked with poppy light;
This young earth must float in floods of amber
Glowing with a crocus flame in the dells of night.

O you cannot cheat the soul of an inborn ambition,
'Tis a naked viewless thing living in its thought,
But it mounts through errors and by valleys of contrition
Till it conquers destiny and finds the thing it sought.

Crown her with stars, this angel of our planet,
Cover her with morning, this thing of pure delight,
Mantle her with midnight till a mortal cannot
See her for the garments of the light and the night.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Message

Wind of the gentle summer night,
Dwell in the lilac tree,
Sway the blossoms clustered light,
Then blow over to me.

Wind, you are sometimes strong and great,
You frighten the ships at sea,
Now come floating your delicate freight
Out of the lilac tree,

Wind you must waver a gossamer sail
To ferry a scent so light,
Will you carry my love a message as frail
Through the hawk-haunted night?

For my heart is sometimes strange and wild,
Bitter and bold and free,
I scare the beautiful timid child,
As you frighten the ships at sea;

But now when the hawks are piercing the air,
With the golden stars above,
The only thing that my heart can bear
Is a lilac message of love.

Gentle wind, will you carry this
Up to her window white
Give her a gentle tender kiss;
Bid her good-night, good-night.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The November Pansy

This is not June,--by Autumn's stratagem
Thou hast been ambushed in the chilly air;
Upon thy fragile crest virginal fair
The rime has clustered in a diadem;
The early frost
Has nipped thy roots and tried thy tender stem,
Seared thy gold petals, all thy charm is lost.

Thyself the only sunshine: in obeying
The law that bids thee blossom in the world
Thy little flag of courage is unfurled;
Inherent pansy-memories are saying
That there is sun,
That there is dew and colour and warmth repaying
The rain, the starlight when the light is done.

These are the gaunt forms of the hollyhocks
That shower the seeds from out their withered purses;
Here were the pinks; there the nasturtium nurses
The last of colour in her gaudy smocks;
The ruins yonder
Show but a vestige of the flaming phlox;
The poppies on their faded glory ponder.

Here visited the vagrant humming-bird,
The nebulous darting green, the ruby-throated;
The warm fans of the butterfly here floated;
Those two nests reared the robins, and the third
Was left forlorn
Muffled in lilacs, whence the perfume stirred
The tremulous eyelids of the dewy morn.

Thy sisters of the early summer-time
Were masquers in this carnival of pleasure;
Each in her turn unrolled her golden treasure,
And thou hast but the ashes of the prime;
'Tis life's own malice
That brings the peasant of a race sublime
To feed her flock around her ruined palace.

Yet for withstanding thus the autumn's dart
Some deeper pansy-insight will atone;
It comes to souls neglected and alone,
Something that prodigals in pleasure's mart
Lose in the whirl;
The peasant child will have a purer heart
Than the vain favourite of the vanished earl.

And far above this tragic world of ours
There is a world of a diviner fashion,
A mystic world, a world of dreams and passion
That each aspiring thing creates and dowers

With its own light;
Where even the frail spirits of trees and flowers
Pause, and reach out, and pass from height to height.

Here will we claim for thee another fief,
An upland where a glamour haunts the meadows,
Snow peaks arise enrobed in rosy shadows,
Fairer the under slopes with vine and sheaf
And shimmering lea;
The paradise of a simple old belief,
That flourished in the Islands of the Sea.

A snow-cool cistern in the fairy hills
Shall feed thy roots with moisture clear as dew;
A ferny shield to temper the warm blue
That heaven is; a thrush that thrills
To answer his mate,
And when above the ferns the shadow fills,
Fireflies to render darkness consolate.

Here muse and brood, moulding thy seed and die
And re-create thy form a thousand fold,
Mellowing thy petals to more lucent gold,
Till they expand, tissues of amber sky;
Till the full hour,
And the full light and the fulfilling eye
Shall find amid the ferns the perfect flower.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Onondaga Madonna

She stands full-throated and with careless pose,
This woman of a weird and waning race,
The tragic savage lurking in her face,
Where all her pagan passion burns and glows;
Her blood is mingled with her ancient foes,
And thrills with war and wildness in her veins;
Her rebel lips are dabbled with the stains
Of feuds and forays and her father's woes.

And closer in the shawl about her breast,
The latest promise of her nation's doom,
Paler than she her baby clings and lies,
The primal warrior gleaming from his eyes;
He sulks, and burdened with his infant gloom,
He draws his heavy brows and will not rest.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Sailor's Sweetheart

O if love were had for asking,
In the markets of the town,
Hardly a lass would think to wear
A fine silken gown:
But love is had by grieving
By choosing and by leaving,
And there's no one now to ask me
If heavy lies my heart.

O if love were had for a deep wish
In the deadness of the night,
There'd be a truce to longing
Between the dusk and the light:
But love is had for sighing,
For living and for dying,
And there's no one now to ask me
If heavy lies my heart.

O if love were had for taking
Like honey from the hive,
The bees that made the tender stuff
Could hardly keep alive:
But love it is a wounded thing,
A tremor and a smart,
And there's no one left to kiss me now
Over my heavy heart.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Sea By The Wood

I DWELL in the sea that is wild and deep,
But afar in a shadow still,
I can see the trees that gather and sleep
In the wood upon the hill.

The deeps are green as an emerald's face,
The caves are crystal calm,
But I wish the sea were a little trace
Of moisture in God's palm.

The waves are weary of hiding pearls,
Are aweary of smothering gold,
They would all be air that sweeps and swirls
In the branches manifold.

They are weary of laving the seaman's eyes
With their passion prayer unsaid,
They are weary of sobs and the sudden sighs
And movements of the dead.

All the sea is haunted with human lips
Ashen and sere and gray,
You can hear the sails of the sunken ships
Stir and shiver and sway

In the weary solitude;
If mine were the will of God, the main
Should melt away in the rustling wood
Like a mist that follows the rain.

But I dwell in the sea that is wild and deep
And afar in the shadow still,
I can see the trees that gather and sleep
In the wood upon the hill.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Violet Pressed in a Copy of Shakespeare

Here in the inmost of the master's heart
This violet crisp with early dew
Has come to leave her beauty and to part
With all her vivid hue.

And while in hollow glades and dells of musk,
Her fellows will reflower in bands,
Clasping the deeps of shade and emerald dusk,
With sweet inviolate hands,

She will lie here, a ghost of their delight,
Their lucent stems all ashen gray,
Their purples fallen into pulvil white,
Dull as the bluebird's alula.

But her where human passions pulse in power,
She will transcend our Shakespeare's art,
From Desdemona to a smothered flower,
Will leap the tragic heart.

And memory will recall in keener mood
The precinct fair where passion grew,
The stars within the water in the wood,
The moonlit grove, the odorous dew.

The voice that throbbed along the summer dark
Will float and pause and thrill,
In lonely cadence silvern as the lark,
To fail below the hill.

The reader will grow weary of the play,
Finding his hearts half understood,
And with the young moon in the early dusk will stray
Beside the starry water in the wood.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Voice And The Dusk

THE slender moon and one pale star,
A rose leaf and a silver bee
From some god's garden blown afar,
Go down the gold deep tranquilly.

Within the south there rolls and grows
A mighty town with tower and spire,
From a cloud bastion masked with rose
The lightning flashes diamond fire.

The purple martin darts about
The purlieus of the iris fen;
The king-bird rushes up and out,
He screams and whirls and screams again.

A thrush is hidden in a maze
Of cedar buds and tamarac bloom,
He throws his rapid flexile phrase,
A flash of emeralds in the gloom.

A voice is singing from the hill
A happy love of long ago;
Ah! tender voice, be still, be still,
''Tis sometimes better not to know.'

The rapture from the amber height
Floats tremblingly along the plain,
Where in the reeds with fairy light
The lingering fireflies gleam again.

Buried in dingles more remote,
Or drifted from some ferny rise,
The swooning of the golden throat
Drops in the mellow dusk and dies.

A soft wind passes lightly drawn,
A wave leaps silverly and stirs
The rustling sedge, and then is gone
Down the black cavern in the firs.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Wood By The Sea

I DWELL in the wood that is dark and kind
But afar off tolls the main,
Afar, far off I hear the wind,
And the roving of the rain.

The shade is dark as a palmer's hood,
The air with balm is bland:
But I wish the trees that breathe in the wood
Were ashes in God's hand.

The pines are weary of holding nests,
Are aweary of casting shade;
Wearily smoulder the resin crests
In the pungent gloom of the glade.

Weary are all the birds of sleep,
The nests are weary of wings,
The whole wood yearns to the swaying deep,
The mother of restful things.

The wood is very old and still,
So still when the dead cones fall,
Near in the vale or away on the hill,
You can hear them one and all.

And their falling wearies me;
If mine were the will of God,–oh, then
The wood should tramp to the sounding sea,
Like a marching army of men!

But I dwell in the wood that is dark and kind,
Afar off tolls the main;
Afar, far off I hear the wind
And the roving of the rain.

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Wood-Spring To The Poet

Dawn-cool, dew-cool
Gleams the surface of my pool
Bird haunted, fern enchanted,
Where but tempered spirits rule;
Stars do not trace their mystic lines
In my confines;
I take a double night within my breast
A night of darkened heavens, a night of leaves,
And in the two-fold dark I hear the owl
Puff at his velvet horn
And the wolves howl.
Even daylight comes with a touch of gold
Not overbold,
And shows dwarf-cornel and the twin-flowers,
Below the balsam bowers,
Their tints enamelled in my dew-drop shield.
Too small even for a thirsty fawn
To quench upon,
I hold my crystal at one level
There where you see the liquid bevel
Break in silver and go free
Singing to its destiny.

Give, Poet, give!
Thus only shalt thou live.
Give! for 'tis thy joyous doom
To charm, to comfort, to illume.

Speak to the maiden and the child
With accents deep and mild,
Tell them of the world so wide
In words of wonder and pure pride,
Touched with the rapture of surprise
That dwells in a child angel's eyes,
Awed with the strangeness of new-birth,
When the flaming seraph sent
To lead him into Paradise,
Calls his name with the mother's voice
He has just ceased to hear on earth.

Give to the youth his heart's content,
But power with prudence blent,
Thicken his sinews with love,
With courage his heart prove,
Till over his spirit shall roll
The vast wave of control.
In the cages and dens of strife,
Where men draw breath
Thick with a curse at the dear thing called life,
Give them courage to bear,
Strength to aspire and dare;
Give them hopes rooted in stone,

That the loveliest flowers take on,
Bind on their brows with a gesture free
The palm green bays of liberty.

Give to the mothers of men
The knowledge of joy in pain,
Give them the sense of reward
That grew in the breast of the Lord
On the dawn of the seventh morn;
For 'tis they who re-create the world
Whenever a child is born.

Give, Poet, give!
Give them songs that charm and fill
The soul with an alluring pleasure,
Prelusive to a deeper thrill,
A richer tone, a fuller measure;
Like voices, veiled with hidden treasure,
Of angels on a windy morning,
That first far off, then all together,
Come with a glorious clarion calling;
And when they swoon beneath the spell
Recapture them to hear the echoes
Falling--falling--falling.

To those stoned for the truth
Give ruth;
Give manna for the mourner's mouth
Sovereign as air;
For his heart's drouth
A prayer.

Give to dead souls that mock at life
Aweary of their cankered hearts,
Weary of sleep and weary of strife,
Weary of markets and of arts,--
Helve them a song of life,
Two-edged with joyous life,
Tempered trusty with life,
Proud pointed with wild life,
Plunge it as lightning plunges,
Stab them to life!

Give to those who grieve in secret,
Those who bear the sorrows of earth,
The deep unappeasable longings
Which beset them with throngings and throngings,
(As, on a windless night,
Through the fold of a dark mantle furled,
Gleams on our world, world after unknown world)
Give them peace,
Wide as the veil that hides God's face,

The pure plenitude of space,
In which our universe is but a glittering crease,--
Give them such peace.

Give, Poet, give!
Thus only shalt thou live:
Give as we give who are hidden
In myriad dimples of rock and fern;
Give as we give unbidden
To tarn and rillet and burn,
Where the lake dreams,
Where the fall is hurled,
Striving to sweeten
The oceans of the world.

Should my song for a moment cease,
Silence fall in the woodland peace;
Should I wilfully check the flow
Bubbling and dancing up from below;
Say to my heart be still--be still,
Let the murmur die with the rill;
Then should the glittering, grey sea-things
Sigh as they wallow the under springs;
Where the deep brine-pools used to lie
Deserts vast would stare at the sky,
And even thy rich heart
(O Poet, Poet!)
Even thy rich heart run dry.

Duncan Campbell Scott

Three Songs

I

Where love is life
The roses blow,
Though winds be rude
And cold the snow,
The roses climb
Serenely slow,
They nod in rhyme
We know--we know
Where love is life
The roses blow.

Where life is love
The roses blow,
Though care be quick
And sorrows grow,
Their roots are twined
With rose-roots so
That rosebuds find
A way to show
Where life is love
The roses blow.

II

Nothing came here but sunlight,
Nothing fell here but rain,
Nothing blew but the mellow wind,
Here are the flowers again!

No one came here but you, dear,
You with your magic train
Of brightness and laughter and lightness,
Here is my joy again!

III

I have songs of dancing pleasure,
I have songs of happy heart,
Songs are mine that pulse in measure
To the throbbing of the mart.

Songs are mine of magic seeming,
In a land of love forlorn,
Where the joys are had for dreaming,
At a summons from the horn.

But my sad songs come unbidden,
Rising with a wilder zest,

From the bitter pool that's hidden,
Deep--deep--deep within my breast.

Duncan Campbell Scott

To a Canadian Aviator Who Died for his Country in France

Tossed like a falcon from the hunter's wrist,
A sweeping plunge, a sudden shattering noise,
And thou hast dared, with a long spiral twist,
The elastic stairway to the rising sun.
Peril below thee and above, peril
Within thy car; but peril cannot daunt
Thy peerless heart: gathering wing and poise,
Thy plane transfigured, and thy motor-chant
Subdued to a whisper -- then a silence, --
And thou art but a disembodied venture
In the void.

But Death, who has learned to fly,
Still matchless when his work is to be done,
Met thee between the armies and the sun;
Thy speck of shadow faltered in the sky;
Then thy dead engine and thy broken wings
Drooped through the arc and passed in fire,
A wreath of smoke -- a breathless exhalation.
But ere that came a vision sealed thine eyes,
Lulling thy senses with oblivion;
And from its sliding station in the skies
Thy dauntless soul upward in circles soared
To the sublime and purest radiance whence it sprang.

In all their eyries, eagles shall mourn thy fate,
And leaving on the lonely crags and scaurs
Their unprotected young, shall congregate
High in the tenuous heaven and anger the sun
With screams, and with a wild audacity
Dare all the battle danger of thy flight;
Till weary with combat one shall desert the light,
Fall like a bolt of thunder and check his fall
On the high ledge, smoky with mist and cloud,
Where his neglected eaglets shriek aloud,
And drawing the film across his sovereign sight
Shall dream of thy swift soul immortal
Mounting in circles, faithful beyond death.

Duncan Campbell Scott

To A Canadian Lad Killed In The War

O noble youth that held our honour in keeping,
And bore it sacred through the battle flame,
How shall we give full measure of acclaim
To thy sharp labour, thy immortal reaping?
For though we sowed with doubtful hands, half sleeping,
Thou in thy vivid pride hast reaped a nation,
And brought it in with shouts and exultation,
With drums and trumpets, with flags flashing and leaping.

Let us bring pungent wreaths of balsam, and tender
Tendrils of wild-flowers, lovelier for thy daring,
And deck a sylvan shrine, where the maple parts
The moonlight, with lilac bloom, and the splendour
Of suns unwearied; all unwithered, wearing
Thy valor stainless in our heart of hearts.

Duncan Campbell Scott

To The Heroic Soul

I

Nurture thyself, O Soul, from the clear spring
That wells beneath the secret inner shrine;
Commune with its deep murmur,--'tis divine;
Be faithful to the ebb and flow that bring
The outer tide of Spirit to trouble and swing
The inlet of thy being. Learn to know
These powers, and life with all its venom and show
Shall have no force to dazzle thee or sting:

And when Grief comes thou shalt have suffered more
Than all the deepest woes of all the world;
Joy, dancing in, shall find thee nourished with mirth;
Wisdom shall find her Master at thy door;
And Love shall find thee crowned with love empearled;
And death shall touch thee not but a new birth.

II

Be strong, O warring soul! For very sooth
Kings are but wraiths, republics fade like rain,
Peoples are reaped and garnered as the grain,
And that alone prevails which is the truth:
Be strong when all the days of life bear ruth
And fury, and are hot with toil and strain:
Hold thy large faith and quell thy mighty pain:
Dream the great dream that buoys thine age with youth.

Thou art an eagle mewed in a sea-stopped cave:
He, poised in darkness with victorious wings,
Keeps night between the granite and the sea,
Until the tide has drawn the warder-wave:
Then from the portal where the ripple rings,
He bursts into the boundless morning,--free!

RETROSPECT

This is the mockery of the moving years;
Youth's colour dies, the fervid morning glow
Is gone from off the foreland; slow, slow,
Even slower than the fount of human tears
To empty, the consuming shadow nears
That Time is casting on the worldly show
Of pomp and glory. But falter not;--below
That thought is based a deeper thought that cheers.

Glean thou thy past; that will alone inure
To catch thy heart up from a dark distress;

It were enough to find one deed mature,
Deep-rooted, mighty 'mid the toil and press;
To save one memory of the sweet and pure,
From out life's failure and its bitterness.

Duncan Campbell Scott

When Spring Goes By

The winds that on the uplands softly lie,
Grow keener where the ice is lingering still
Where the first robin on the sheltered hill
Pipes blithely to the tune, "When Spring goes by!"
Hear him again, "Spring! Spring!" He seems to cry,
Haunting the fall of the flute-throated rill,
That keeps a gentle, constant, silver thrill,
While he is restless in his ecstasy.

Ah! the soft budding of the virginal woods,
Of the frail fruit trees by the vanishing lakes:
There's the new moon where the clear sunset floods,
A trace of dew upon the rose leaf sky;
And hark! what rapture the glad robin wakes-
"When Spring goes by; Spring! Spring! When
Spring goes by."

Duncan Campbell Scott

Willow-Pipes

So in the shadow by the nimble flood
He made her whistles of the willow wood,
Flutes of one note with mellow slender tone;
(A robin piping in the dusk alone).
Lively the pleasure was the wand to bruise,
And notch the light rod for its lyric use,
Until the stem gave up its tender sheath,
And showed the white and glistening wood beneath.
And when the ground was covered with light chips,
Grey leaves and green, and twigs and tender slips,
They placed the well-made whistles in a row
And left them for the careless wind to blow.

Duncan Campbell Scott